

**COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT**

**REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

**SUBJECT: EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE – 11<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2019**

**REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER**

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**PRESENT: COUNCILLOR H. TROLLOPE (CHAIR)**

Councillors: J. Millard  
M. Cook  
G.A. Davies  
L. Elias  
W. Hodgins  
J. Holt  
J.C. Morgan  
K. Pritchard  
K. Rowson  
T. Smith  
B. Summers  
S. Thomas

**Co-opted Member**

A. Williams

**AND:** Corporate Director of Education  
Head of Education Transformation  
Service Manager Inclusion  
Strategic Education Improvement Manager  
Senior Educational Welfare Officer  
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
<b>No. 1</b>	<b><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></b>  It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	

<p><b>No. 2</b></p>	<p><b><u>APOLOGIES</u></b></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D. Bevan and C. Meredith.</p> <p><b><u>Co-opted Member</u></b> T. Baxter</p>	
<p><b>No. 3</b></p>	<p><b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
<p><b>No. 4</b></p>	<p><b><u>EDUCATION &amp; LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></b></p> <p>The Minutes of the Education &amp; Learning Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> June, 2019 were submitted.</p> <p>Councillor Lyn Elias reported that his name had been spelt incorrectly.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
<p><b>No. 5</b></p>	<p><b><u>ACTION SHEET – 26<sup>TH</sup> JUNE, 2019</u></b></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Education &amp; Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 26<sup>th</sup> June, 2019 was submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p><b><u>Item 6 – Proposed Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2019/20</u></b></p> <p>A Member requested that the additional items to be included in the Forward Work Programme be itemised on the Action Sheet and on the Forward Work Programme in future.</p> <p>The Chair requested that a list of acronyms be included within reports.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the action sheet be noted.</p>	<p>Director of Education</p>

<p><b>No. 6</b></p>	<p><b><u>EXECUTIVE DECISIONS FOR THE EDUCATION AND LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the Executive Decision Sheet. The Scrutiny &amp; Democratic Officer/Advisor clarified that the decision sheet was included on the agenda for greater transparency between Scrutiny and the Executive and would be included on all future Scrutiny Committees.</p> <p>A Member commented that the Summary of Inspection Outcomes for Educational Establishments was a statutory item and felt that it needed to be reported into Executive Committee. The Director of Education advised Members that it was for the Executive Committee to decide what would be included in their Forward Work Programme.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Decision Sheet be noted.</p>	
<p><b>No. 7</b></p>	<p><b><u>HOME TO SCHOOL AND POST 16 TRANSPORT POLICY 2019/20</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Education Transformation Manager which was presented to seek Members views in relation to the review of Blaenau Gwent Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy for the 2020/21 academic session.</p> <p>The Head of Education Transformation spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein and included that the implementation date for the Policy was September 2020.</p> <p>A Member enquired regarding the new legislation in relation to pupils with Additional Learning Needs. The Head of Education Transformation said that the ALN Panel would determine the needs of the individuals and ensure access to appropriate education provision and transport.</p> <p>In relation to additional travel costs incurred due to changes in the curriculum, the Head of Education Transformation said that the Policy covered Home to School transport and that schools would fund additional costs if pupils needed to travel for curriculum related needs within the schools.</p>	

In response to a Member's question regarding the Home to School budget, the Head of Education Transformation said that the Transport Team were constantly reviewing arrangements to help reduce cost pressures. The current forecast adverse variance of £38,000 related to special schools.

In relation to the Welsh Government guidelines, the Head of Education Transformation said that the Council was more generous in respect of home to school transport entitlement than the Welsh Government statutory limits. The Welsh Government statutory requirement was three miles for secondary learners.

A Member enquired if the £50 per term travel grant was in line with inflation. The Head of Education Transformation said that this amount did not cover the full cost of travel. Stage Coach charged £1 per journey which the learner had to contribute. This charge had been introduced in the 2013/14 academic year and had remained at £1 per journey over a number of years.

In relation to travel routes the Head of Education Transformation informed Members that Stage Coach had made a commitment to the Council to keep bus routes to the Learning Zone available and that although the Council had no direct influence over bus routes they had listened to the views that came from the Post 16 statutory consultation exercise.

A Member enquired if travel to Breakfast and After School clubs was the responsibility of parents/carers. The Head of Education Transformation said that if a pupil attended breakfast club or after school club then it would be the responsibility of the parent/carer to transport their children to and from activities outside of the normal school day. This point would be made more explicit when the Policy was published.

The Committee AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy 2020/21 (Appendix 1) be recommended to the Executive Committee for approval.

**No. 8**

**CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION (CME) 2019**

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education which was presented to inform Members of the Children Missing Education (CME) data and the processes in place.

The Senior Educational Welfare Officer spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein. The Director of Education clarified the definition of Children Missing Education (CME) was children moving and their families not leaving a forwarding address. The Senior Educational Welfare Officer was responsible for identifying, locating and engaging children who were CME and currently none were outstanding.

A Member enquired regarding the non-attendance at school for a period of 20 days. The Director of Education said that this was the maximum period allowed and the Authority did not wait for 20 days. Schools would be using their first day response procedures to ensure telephone calls and visits were undertaken before the period of 20 consecutive days was highlighted by the school.

A Member felt that it was important that schools should receive transfer information before the transfer took place so that the school would be aware of any issues. The Senior Educational Welfare Officer confirmed that Common Transfer Files (CTF) were sent to the receiving schools when transfers took place and could be imported to their data system.

The Chair enquired regarding the timeline to ensure that the CTF was in place. The Senior Educational Welfare Officer explained that after 20 days the CTF would be uploaded as Children Missing Education and once the child had been located this would then be updated.

The Service Manager Inclusion commented that the Common Transfer File was just one set of information and if there were any pupil concerns then further information could be requested and confirmed that robust mechanisms were in place.

The Head of Education Transformation clarified that the

	<p>CTF process was part of the guidelines. The Admissions Team worked closely with schools to ensure that information was shared in a timely manner.</p> <p>In response to a Member’s question regarding families that emigrate, the Senior Educational Welfare Officer said that normally in those cases a forwarding address had been received.</p> <p>A Member enquired if there was an All Wales database for Missing Children. The Senior Educational Welfare Officer said there was no database, however, they worked closely with other authorities and had contact details for each authority through their All Wales meetings and were aware of those children who were CME. The Authority had a statutory duty under the Local Government Act to effectively meet its obligations.</p> <p>In response to a Member’s question regarding the time lapse for pupils who leave temporarily and then return to the Borough, the Senior Educational Welfare Officer said that the Admissions Team had 15 days to process the application.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2, namely that the detail contained within the report and the work undertaken to date be acknowledged.</p>	
<p><b>No. 9</b></p>	<p><b><u>EDUCATION DIRECTORATE SELF EVALUATION POLICY – REVISION 2019</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Strategic Education Improvement Manager which presented the revised draft self-evaluation policy, protocol and practice for Local Government Education Services (LGES).</p> <p>The Strategic Education Improvement Manager spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>In response to a Member’s enquiry regarding SER, the Director of Education said there had been a subtle shift in the cyclical process to make the information more</p>	

	<p>accessible for stakeholders to ensure its continued effectiveness. All local authorities needed to demonstrate the cyclical process and ongoing improvement. The SER was an important process and a key document to continued and sustainable improvements and enabled the Directorate to remain focused on those areas that required improvements. She advised that following the conclusion of the October Scrutiny meeting Members would see how the performance data was used by schools and Headteachers to ensure that children and young people made good progress.</p> <p>A Member enquired if an external review of the SER should be undertaken. The Director of Education said that Estyn looked at the SER every term and over 80 impact and evaluation reports had been undertaken by Officers and captured in the SER. At the end of the process in addition to the full SER document, Members received one of the three summary SER's developed. She advised that Estyn were clear that the self evaluation was accurate and with the way in which Regulators shared information.</p> <p>A Member asked what information could be shared to show that we are moving forward. The Director of Education said that discussions had been held regionally to agree a regional version on how performance information could be presented to Scrutiny. This report would be presented to the October meeting.</p> <p>The Chair referred to the Summary SER for children, parents and wider consultees. The Director of Education said that this took place with key messages that parents could clearly understand but the information for teachers was more technical.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the report be accepted as provided.</p>	
<p><b>No. 10</b></p>	<p><b><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 23<sup>RD</sup> OCTOBER 2019</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Education &amp; Learning Scrutiny Committee which</p>	

presented the Forward Work Programme for the meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 2019.

A Member requested that an evaluation report on the Education Achievement Service (EAS) be prepared for a future meeting to look at value for money and to include Service Level Agreements and budget issues. The Director of Education said that the Authority's contribution had been reduced year on year against increasing improvements. An Independent Review was currently being undertaken and would be reported to Scrutiny Committee in due course.

Members were advised that the next meeting of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee had been moved to the 25<sup>th</sup> October, 2019 at 10.30 a.m. and would be held in Tredegar Comprehensive School. The Director of Education advised that following the conclusion of the Scrutiny Committee meeting the Headteacher would inform Members on how the Provisional School Performance information in the report was used by schools.

The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> October, 2019 be approved.