



MERTHYR TYDFIL
County Borough Council
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol
MERTHYR TUDFUL

MINUTES OF MEETING

SCRUTINY : LEARNING AND LAESCYP MEETING

MONDAY, 15TH JUNE, 2015

PRESENT: Councillor L Mytton (**In the Chair**)

Councillors S Williams, M Davies, S Slater and C Tovey

Councillor Harvey Jones (Portfolio Member)

Cooptees:

Teresa Bradley and Alan Rees

Officers:

Dorothy Haines (Chief Officer (Learning) - Chief Education Officer), Carys Kennedy (Head of Legal and Governance Services - Monitoring Officer), Richard Parry (Consultant for School Improvement), Lisa Jones (Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development) and Gary Winston (Team Leader - Governor Support)

Howard Jones (Scrutiny Officer) and Karen Vokes (Democratic Services Officer)

ITEM NO.	AGENDA MATTER	DECISION
46	Apologies for absence	Apologies for absence received from Councillor K Moran and David Lewis (Co-opted member).
47	Declarations of Interest (including whipping declarations)	No declarations of interest were made.
48	Lessons Learned update - Human Resources	Lisa Jones gave an update to members on the HR work to progress the Action plans following the previous Lessons Learner reports.

		<p>She outlined in detail the key issues that needed addressing, ie. lack of leadership, no visible collective management and unclear processes. Also discussed in detail were the actions taken to improve the HR Services to schools.</p> <p>Officers provided advice and background information in relation to the following questions from the Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have all Schools signed up to our Service Level Agreement? • Are minutes/action notes taken for the School Strategy Group and other informal meetings. • HR Customer Charter. Lisa Jones advised that she is happy to share a copy with anyone. • Does the Authority have any outstanding long term gardening leave and how quickly would they be resolved. • From the initial report, it was identified that the Legal Department had not always been sufficiently briefed with all the relevant facts. Advice was sometimes given on the basis of an incomplete picture and not always briefed sufficiently early and at the outset of the initial concerns so that some issues had escalated too far by the time legal staff were involved. <p>Can the Committee have an assurance that this is unlikely to occur again and that the necessary mechanisms are in place?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The requirement and the use of external investigators for Headteacher disciplinary matters. • Planned workshops with HR to review processes and guidance which will better inform Headteachers/Governors of SLA's and also understand the impact of SLA's to the Governors.
49	Schools & LAESCYP Scrutiny Committee: additional areas of responsibility	<p>Dorothy Haines gave an update to the Committee on the additional areas of responsibility that the Committee will be responsible for under the new Schools and LAESCYP Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>Officers provided advice and background information in relation to the following from the Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the areas of additional responsibility, what are the main critical issues that we will face over the next 12 months? • Understand that money is being made available to Authorities through the Communities First

		<p>programme and are you, as a department, satisfied that this is sufficient for the collaboration to continue for the next 12 months and onwards and that the performance factor will be to the department's satisfaction.</p> <p>Following a query, the chair advised that she will e-mail members with the new title of this Scrutiny Committee.</p>
50	Report on School Governing Bodies	<p>Gary Winston gave an update on the general governance issues.</p> <p>He advised members of the current position with regard to recruitment and retention outlining that there has been a reduction in the number of vacancies although it is still above the Welsh Government's guidance of 5%. He also outlined proposals for improving recruitment.</p> <p>Officers provided advice and background information in relation to the following questions from the Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With regard to Headteachers/Chairs of Governors Forum being held each term, is there any feedback to problematic areas or the way forward to addressing the concerns discussed? • Concern over Local Authority Governors that are not Councillors not realising the importance of raising attainment. Could there be a requirement that Local Authority Governors attend training to disseminate this message to the parent governors? <p>He referred to the current position of Governor training and advised members that it is an essential requirement for Local Authorities to provide a comprehensive programme. He advised that Regulations introduced within the two years have made certain training mandatory, i.e. induction training for new Governors, understanding school data, Chair of Governors and Clerk to the Governing bodies.</p> <p>Officers provided advice and background information in relation to the following questions from the Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With regard to Appendix 1 (Summary of Governor Training for 2014/15) concerned was expressed about the poor attendance of only 3 to the training for understanding the needs of vulnerable children. Because of the priorities and understanding the needs of vulnerable children, should this training be mandatory? • Do we have any data for the reasons of the high turnover of Governors and do you think that a "Pre-Governors Pack" giving Governors an idea of what is expected of them, could actually benefit and slow down the turnover of Governors?

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you have a Leavers' Survey where you take information from Governors to ascertain the actual reasons for them leaving. <p>Dorothy Haines advised that this is not being done but is a good idea which could easily be put into place.</p> <p>General discussion ensued in relation to the availability of Governors attending training. In relation to Councillors that are appointed Governors, the Chair suggested that consideration be given to holding training sessions prior to a Full Council meeting. Also Gary Winston may consider contacting Political Party Leaders of the Authority with regard to current vacancies.</p> <p>The Chair advised that although SLA training is not a mandatory requirement, she feels that it is essential to understand the importance of SLA's, what a SLA means to a School and also the impact if a School choosing to opt out of a SLA.</p> <p>Alan Rees, Co-opted member, left the meeting at 5.10 pm.</p>
51	Scrutiny Referrals, Feedback and Follow up Actions	The Chair advised that there was no update in relation to this item.
52	Reflection and Evaluation of Meeting	The Chair reflected in detail on the issues that had been considered at the meeting.
53	Forward Work Programme	The Chair advised that she will be in contact with Lorraine Buck and Dorothy Haines to look at some critical factors to be included in our Forward Work Programme.
54	Any other business deemed urgent by the Chair	The Chair advised that there was no business deemed urgent.