

**TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL  
EDUCATION SERVICE**

**TORFAEN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL GOVERNORS**

**Summary of the meeting held on Tuesday, 23 March 2010 at 6.30 p.m. at  
County Hall**

**Present:** Mr G. Barnett (Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw) Chairman  
Cllrs M. Thomas (Croesyceiliog Primary and Comp) R. Clark  
(Croesyceiliog Primary and Comp)  
Mesdames Y Balakrishnan (Ysgol Bryn Onnen), A. Parry (Pontymoile)  
S. Norton (Ponhir) M. Smith (Two Locks Nursery) C. Cleaves  
(Abersychan)  
Messrs M. Davis (Croesyceiliog Primary and Comp) A.Tait (Hollybush  
and Pontnewydd) T.N. Jones (West Mon and Kemys Fawr) M.  
Osborne (New Inn) P. Squire (Henllys) S. Smith (Llantarnam and  
Brookfield) G. White (Ysgol Gymraeg Cwmbran)

**Also present:** M. Provis, Chief Education Officer  
D.Joseph, M. Durbin and D. McChrystal (LEA)  
Miss A. Jenkins, clerk to the Association

**Apologies for absence:** Cllr M. Barnett, Executive Member for Children and Young  
People

Cllr P. Seabourne (Blenheim Rd) Messrs R.Marchant (Abersychan)  
J. Phillips (Greenmeadow) D. Weaver (Garnteg)

**1. Budget Update**

- 1.1 Schools have now received budget packs. It was generally a standstill general budget but the named pupil budget has increased by 5%. The 2010/11 budget is based on the new funding formula which will be monitored and any future changes will be subject to consultation.
- 1.2 The WAG contribution to the Better Schools Fund has been significantly reduced and although the LEA will continue to delegate 60% to schools this will still mean cuts for individual budgets. The BSF will now be directed at only three areas – School Effectiveness Framework, Inclusion & Safeguarding, Welsh.
- 1.3 School Funding Regulations will change in 2011/12 and will be the subject of future discussion with TASG. A key issue involves school balances. Schools with over 8% surplus can be directed by the LEA to spend, if this is not done

the money can be clawed back into the schools delegated budget and re-allocated. The Scheme of Delegation will need to reflect this but consideration will be given to schools retaining a sum for a specific purpose.

- 1.4 Future funding cuts to councils will be even more severe and the Minister has commissioned a review of bureaucracy, grants, school funding etc with a view of increasing allocations to schools. Several streams of funding such as grants will be combined in future.
- 1.5 D.McC informed governors that as a result of the review grants available to LEAs for travellers and English as a Foreign Language have been delayed and there could be a significant impact on some pupils.

## **2. Minutes and Matters arising**

- 2.2 The minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2010 were confirmed subject to minor amendments and governors approved the re-wording of minute 8.3.6 regarding an initiative in the Heads of the Valley which could affect post 16 plans in Torfaen.

## **3. Reserve member**

- 3.1 This appointment was deferred.

## **4. CEO items**

- 4.1 As a result of the current financial situation Torfaen is looking at means of collaborating and sharing services with neighbouring LAs. This could mean savings would be made in back office in order to maintain frontline services wherever possible. At a recent 21<sup>st</sup> century schools conference, the Minister indicated the current post 16 provision in Wales is unsustainable and LEA plans must address the issue of surplus places in secondary schools.
- 4.2 Technology-rich learning  
Research shows children are highly motivated to learn with new technology and Torfaen is well advanced in this area. Very late in this financial year, Torfaen has obtained funding to establish a new plaza at Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw and MP thanked staff, governors and officers for their response to complete the project by the end of March. In collaboration with Monmouthshire LEA, Torfaen is co-hosting a Multi Media Suite in County Hall which will provide a range of facilities for teachers and schools. Torfaen is also working with Newport and Monmouthshire on a 14-16 bid to WAG.
- 4.3 Post 16

Cabinet has now approved its preferred option of an Integrated post 16 Centre subject to WAG funding. If approval is received a full consultation process will be required next year. There was concern at how the needs of pupils would be met in the interim period before any new post 16 provision is available. MP made it clear that regardless of the new proposals there was an urgent need to strengthen the partnership between schools/college in providing relevant and accessible courses for pupils as a matter of priority.

#### 4.4 School Profiles

The first school profile has now been presented to Scrutiny. Profiles will provide an in- depth assessment of strengths and weaknesses and also contain a large amount of data and information within one document. Profiles are compiled in consultation with the headteacher and an action plan prepared jointly. The process will enable members to have a wider understanding of the issues facing schools and education in general. A working group is now looking at a profile for use with primary schools. It is envisaged that Secondary Schools will be reviewed every two years with primary profiles being presented as a 'family' in alternate years. Prior to discussion with members, profiles will be presented to the governing body who will have strategic responsibility for the outcomes. Profile Action Plans will be compatible with post inspection action plans. Profiles will be available electronically to enable schools to provide information for inspection without duplication of work.

#### 4.5 School Effectiveness Framework

The new School Effectiveness Framework has been agreed between WAG, LEAs and Schools. Torfaen will be working in the S.E. Wales Consortium (SEWC) area. The consortium will be reviewing the document ' Developing a national system for education in Wales by embedding the School Effectiveness Framework' and will submit its proposals to WAG on how the system will work within its area. The SEF will involve headteachers visiting schools in other authorities and governing bodies will be required to approve absence for these visits. There is concern at the cost involved for cover, and participation if school budgets cannot afford to cover the heads absence. There is also concern over the quality of staff coming into schools. Authorities will be working as a consortium in order to address some of these issues and provide a consistent approach.

#### 4.6 Attendance

Attendance figures in Torfaen have seen a significant drop since the last inspection from 7<sup>th</sup> place to 21<sup>st</sup>. Secondary overall attendance last year was 89% and primary 94%. Poor attendance is not only linked to poor attainment but also to youth crime. Workshops on behaviour and attendance have been held for primary and secondary schools and it was agreed that a similar

session be held for governors. Following on from these workshops there will be a new Attendance Policy for Torfaen with data being provided for schools and governing bodies. Systems for following up and recording absence vary between schools. MP reminded governors they have a duty of care to respond to absenteeism and contact parents.

#### 4.7 Safeguarding

The NSPCC is offering updated training on safeguarding for schools' designated Child Protection Officer and Child Protection Governor. It is hoped governors would feedback to their governing body and schools would review their own policy. MP reminded governors there was a requirement to keep up to date and from this year training would be recorded and reported back to governing bodies. From this year, schools in Wales can fail an inspection if the safeguarding role has not been undertaken adequately. It is crucial that governing bodies understand the importance of their responsibility in this area. It was proposed this issue be an item for all governing body meetings.

### **5. Governors Wales**

5.1 The GW update included details of the latest publications including a 'Jargon buster' which is available on their website [www.governorswales.org.uk](http://www.governorswales.org.uk). The regional conference will be on 14 May in Newport and the theme will be 'The effectiveness of governing bodies and the role they play in influencing school standards'. There is a pilot scheme looking at a quality mark for governing bodies. A sample of governing bodies across Wales have received a questionnaire on school governance overall and GW services.

5.2 GB, AT and MO were nominated to attend the Governors Wales AGM/conference in July. AT was nominated for re-election as Treasurer. If governing bodies wish TASG to consider putting any motions to the AGM they should contact A. Jenkins (Governor Support).

### **6. Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

6.1 GB reported on the meetings held on 10 February and 17 March. Issues discussed had already been covered in this meeting.

### **7. Referrals**

7.1 There were no referrals.

### **8. Future meetings**

- 8.1 It was agreed the chairman, vice chairman and Chief Education Officer set the date of the summer term meeting when updates on funding and other issues are available. Agenda items would include:
- Safeguarding feedback
  - Feedback on the Readers Guide for school profiles
  - Vetting and Barring Scheme

**9. Any other business**

9.1 Guide to the Law

The updated copy of the guide is now available in schools and on line at <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/091223governoslawguideen.pdf>

Anne Jenkins  
Clerk to the governing body  
25 March 2010