



CABINET – 9TH DECEMBER 2020

SUBJECT: 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION BAND B PROGRAMME – CONSULTATION REPORTS

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The attached Consultation Reports outline the consultation process undertaken and provides clarification in relation to the information provided and consultee engagement, summarising the issues raised on proposals under the 21st Century Schools and Colleges Band B programme in respect of:

Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Gwyddon

The relocation and expansion of Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Gwyddon to a new purpose-built Welsh-medium provision school to be situated on the vacant site of the former Cwmcarn High School.

Trinity Fields School

The expansion of the existing Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre, via a new building extension and outdoor play space.

The Consultation Reports were considered by the Education Scrutiny Committee on 26th November 2020. The Report sought the views of Members and asked that Members considered the information contained in the Consultation Report and endorse the recommendations to Cabinet to proceed to Statutory Notice in relation to both proposals.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Education Scrutiny Committee Members were advised that there is a duty under the School Organisation Code 2018 for Cabinet members to give due regard to the content of each Consultation Report in order to determine whether it is appropriate to move to the next stage of the process.
- 2.2 The 21st Century Schools Band B proposals for Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre and Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Gwyddon went to formal consultation between the 14th September 2020 and the 26th October 2020. The Education Scrutiny Committee were consulted as part of this process at their meeting held on the 22nd September 2020. As a consultee, Members voted unanimously in favour of the proposal for

Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Gwyddon and 13 in favour with 1 against for the proposal for Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre.

3. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE COMMENTS

- 3.1 This report came before the Education Scrutiny Committee on 26th November 2020. The Chair decided before the meeting that each proposal would be considered and voted on separately. The proposal for Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre was the first to be considered by the Committee.
- 3.2 The Chair agreed to a request from two external contributors to be allowed to speak to Committee Members in relation to the proposal for Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre. Mr Owen Francis, director of Turley planning consultancy was representing his clients Penallta RFC and the Save Ystrad Green Spaces Group. The other contributor was Mr Mike Cook, Chair of Governors at Trinity Fields School. Mr Francis advised Committee Members that he was objecting to the proposal because the preferred delivery option would result in the repurposing of a pay-to-use rugby pitch that was used by Penallta RFC. The pitch is referred to as Trinity 1 in Appendix 1 of the report. Mr Francis claimed that input from his clients had not been fully represented in the Consultation Report, and he raised in particular an objection from Sport Wales that had not been addressed. He suggested that a decision on the proposal should be deferred so that options could be fully assessed. Mr Cook advised Members that Trinity Fields was a very successful school and that this had been recognised in a recent ESTYN report. Members heard how the proposed expansion would create an additional 80 places for children and that currently there was no more space available. Mr Cook advised Members that the proposal would create improved facilities for children with special needs and their families, talking first-hand as a parent of a child that had progressed through the school. Mr Cook also outlined how the proposal would allow essential services to be delivered locally and that community use could be further accommodated to that already in existence.
- 3.3 The 21st Century School Manager delivered a presentation with regards to the Trinity Fields School proposal. As part of the presentation it was highlighted that the process being followed is a Statutory Process prescribed in the Welsh Government's (WG) School Organisation Code 2018 which sets out the policy context, and principles that the Council must follow when bringing forward proposals to reconfigure school provision. The consultation process is one stage of a larger process and the steps involved were outlined in detail. The consultation exercise carried out between September/October was to gain the views of the prescribed consultee cohort and support Cabinet in considering the proposal. In addition, as a matter of courtesy Penallta RFC and Sports Wales were advised of the proposal. The WG School Organisation Code 2018 states that the purpose of the Consultation Report is to 'summarise each of the issues raised by consultees', 'responding to these by means of clarification' and to 'set our Estyn's response to the consultation in full'. Members were reminded that at this stage of the process, the responses provided by consultees are considered as 'views' only. Any adverse comments should be regarded as such and should not be considered as objections at this point. It was stressed that there would be a separate full planning application process to be carried out at a later point and led by the Authority's Building Consultancy Team.
- 3.4 Following the presentation from the 21st Century Schools Manager, the Chair invited questions from Committee Members. During the course of the ensuing debate, one Member queried why there were no responses for the Trinity Field proposal received in Welsh during the Consultation Process and questioned if there was equal access for Welsh-speakers. The 21st Century Schools Manager advised that all documents

were produced bilingually and that a Welsh Language Equality Impact Assessment had also been carried out in the planning stages of the consultation. One Member asked why the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board hadn't been included as part of the stakeholder engagement process. The 21st Century Schools Manager outlined how the health board along with Social Services had been heavily involved in establishing the key requirements of the consultation documents prior to the stakeholder engagement period. One Member queried how repurposing a rugby pitch was consistent with the Council's commitment to tackle obesity at a local level. The 21st Century Schools Manager advised that the Council is currently working with Penallta RFC to provide an alternative replacement pay-as-you-use facility, off site and within convenient access by foot (0.5 miles / 10 minute walk) consisting of 1 enhanced existing pitch and an additional pitch to mitigate the loss of Trinity 1. The Member queried the term community usage and advised that junior rugby teams could not use the Centre of Sporting Excellence because priority was given to senior and professional rugby teams. The Sport and Leisure Development Manager outlined that from 5pm the centre was for community use only, he advised that partners used the facility during the day and that this was an important source of revenue. One Member queried if the loss of Trinity 1 was consistent with the Council's Green Infrastructure Strategy. Officers advised that this would be considered as part of the planning process. Officers advised that the proposed repurposing related to just 6% of the total park area and that the Council was planning to ultimately enhance provision with an additional pitch. One Member observed that losing green space was regrettable and asked about the ongoing sustainability of the proposed expanded facility at Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre. On the issue of sustainability Members heard how children are kept at the centre of all proposals. Through robust assessment and the latest data analysis, this enhanced facility would enable the Authority to discharge its duties under the current and new ALN Act and in conjunction with the wider hub and spoke model deployed in Caerphilly would ensure a sustainable site at Trinity Fields for the future. The Chair suggested that areas at neighbouring sites such as Ystrad Mynach Primary School could also be considered as part of the mitigation for the loss of Trinity 1. Officers agreed that other nearby green sites owned by the Council could be considered as options to further increase the provision available to the community in Ystrad Mynach.

- 3.5 The proposal for Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Gwyddon was considered when Committee reached the last item on that evening's agenda. Following a presentation from the 21st Century Schools Manager, the Chair invited questions from Committee Members. During the course of the ensuing debate, one Member raised the issue of a petition against the proposal to use the former Cwmcarn High School site. The 21st Century Schools Manager advised that the petition carried out in 2019 prior to the publication of the proposals for Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Gwyddon was not included in the report as it was submitted outside the formal consultation period. One Member asked about current provision of Special Resource Base (SRB) education in the Welsh language. The Lead for Inclusion and ALN advised that there was SRB education in Welsh at Primary Level for children with complex needs and that the proposal would allow the Council to enhance this provision and meet requirements set out in the ALN Act. One Member raised the issue of a feasibility report by the NRW which highlighted a flood plain at the site in Cwmcarn. The Client Manager with Property Services advised that there were no concerns as the flood plain is on the lower football pitch and did not affect the school site, but that it would be investigated in further detail as part of the planning process.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the following recommendation be forwarded to Cabinet for approval. By way of Roll Call voting (and in noting there were 13 for, 0 against and 2 abstentions) this was agreed.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that the Education Scrutiny Committee does endorse the recommendation to proceed to Statutory Notice in relation to the Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre proposal.

- 4.2 Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the following recommendation be forwarded to Cabinet for approval. By way of Roll Call voting (and in noting there were 13 for, 0 against and 0 abstentions) this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that the Education Scrutiny Committee does endorse the recommendation to proceed to Statutory Notice in relation to the Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Gwyddon proposal.

- 4.3 Cabinet are asked to consider the information contained in the Consultation Reports and the comments made by the Education Scrutiny Committee.

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Appendices:
Appendix 21st Century Schools and Education Band B Programme – Consultation Reports.