

Response by Governing Body of Lewis School Pengam regarding the potential termination of the Caerphilly CBC School PFI Contract.

The governors of Lewis School Pengam met last night to discuss the proposals set out in the business case. The governors expressed concern as to the pace with which the process has been undertaken and felt that it would have been beneficial if more time had been available for the consideration of the proposal. There was a concern that some factors highlighted in the business case lacked detail and that ultimately there may be some future detriment to the experiences of the pupils, particularly as a result of the ending of lifecycle arrangements.

Governors understood that a more equitable arrangement in the way secondary schools are funded would be of benefit to the LEI but wished to stress that there would likely be a period of transition to the new working arrangements and new workload requirements, they expressed a hope that the LEI would support the school during that transition period.

Ultimately, governors recognised that there may well be opportunities in the new arrangement proposed by the LEI, particularly in regard to the community use of the school, more flexibility in response to budgetary pressures, or in addressing the concerns governors have had in regard to catering provision. They also believe that new arrangements may help remove some barriers to the process of sixth form/surplus places reform that have been considered in recent years.

Governors expressed a hope that the LEI and Lewis School Pengam would continue to work in close partnership moving forward and together address any unforeseen problems that emerge as this process reaches a resolution. They recognise the support the school has historically enjoyed from the LEI and would wish that to continue in the future.

CCBC Officers Response:

The Council acknowledges the comments made by the Governors of Lewis School Pengam. In relation to timescales and detail, it is important to be clear on what level of engagement is appropriate in this particular circumstance, as per the guidance in the Council's Consultation and Engagement Framework.

This proposal relates to a voluntary termination of a contractual agreement between the Authority and the PFI Contractor only through which the provision of building maintenance, catering facilities, cleaning facilities and caretaking facilities are provided. As such, there is a clear contractual mechanism to follow in this instance.

This proposal seeks to secure equality of investment across all the schools in Caerphilly County Borough dependant on need based on a number of factors e.g. condition surveys and Health and Safety. Currently the level of investment into the two PFI schools is disproportionate at present and is significantly higher when compared to all other schools. The school has been engaged with to advise them of the publication of the Report and provide information to assist them in understanding the opportunities and/or solutions which are anticipated to result from the withdrawal from the PFI arrangement with the contractor.

Officers will continue to keep the school informed of the process and provide support to the school in determining the ongoing provision of services, subject to approval of the proposal as no formal decision has been taken to proceed at this stage.

To ensure openness and transparency, this document will be included as an annex to the main report going forward to Members to enable conscientious consideration.