



SPECIAL EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL SPECIAL MEETING HELD AT THE
COUNCIL OFFICES PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON
WEDNESDAY 20TH MARCH 2024 AT 5.30 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor B. Miles - Chair

Councillors:

E.M. Aldworth, C. Bishop, M. Chacon-Dawson, P. Cook, A. Farina-Childs, C. Gordon, A. Leonard, J. Roberts, J. Simmonds, and J. Winslade.

Cabinet Members:

Councillors C. Andrews (Education and Communities), and E. Forehead (Social Care).

Together with:

Officers: R. Edmunds (Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services), K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy), P. Warren (Strategic Lead for School Improvement), G. Jenkins (Interim Director of Social Services), A. West (Place Shaping and Sustainable Communities for Learning Service Manager), C. Boardman (Development Manager), C. Ewings (Youth Service Manager (Participation and Inclusion)), L. Kabza (Youth Participation and Curriculum Projects Coordinator), M. Jacques (Scrutiny Officer), J. Thomas (Committee Services Officer) and J. Lloyd (Committee Services Officer).

Also in attendance:

Councillor J. Pritchard, and co-opted Members Mr M Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education Representative), and Mrs T. Millington (Parent Governor Representative). C. Lancaster (Vice Chair Youth Forum), Mr C. Parry (Headteacher of Lewis School, Pengam), J. James (Jon James Architects), A. Villis (Quad Consult), and L. Hopkins (The Urbanists).

RECORDING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chair reminded those present that the meeting was being live streamed, and a recording would be made available to view via the Council's website, except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items. [Click Here To View](#).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from D. Street (Deputy Chief Executive), Councillors A. Broughton-Pettit, D. Cushing, M. Evans, T. Heron, T. Parry, S. Skivens, and K. Woodland. Mr G. James (Parent Governor Representative), Mrs P. Ireland (NEU), Mrs K. Cole (NEU), and Mr D. Davies (Caerphilly Governors Association).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

3. POST 16, SINGLE SEX AND SURPLUS PLACES BOARD – FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET.

Councillor C. Andrews (Cabinet Member for Education and Communities) introduced the report which sought the views of the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee on two linked proposals to Cabinet that had been made by the Post 16, Single Sex and Surplus Places Board.

The proposals sought Cabinet agreement to undertake a formal consultation on the provision of Single Sex Education at Lewis School, Pengam, and Lewis Girls School, as well as a proposal to address some long-standing issues of Surplus Places across Secondary School provision in the Upper Rhymney Valley area.

A Member queried if the consultation would extend to parents and pupils yet to attend Lewis School Pengam and Lewis Girls School, but who planned to do so for secondary education. Members were advised that parents of pupils attending feeder schools within the catchment area would be consulted if the recommendations were accepted. The Member enquired about staff implications if the proposal on single sex provision went ahead. Members were advised that HR consultations would potentially take place in the future, but at this stage support was being sought purely on going out for initial consultation on the recommendations. The Member asked if the proposal was motivated by a drop in birthrates. Members were advised that the main driving force was quality of education and the well-being of pupils and that currently pupils are separated at the age of eleven from friends and family. Members heard about surplus places at both Lewis schools which was linked to the recommendations under discussion, but it was stressed that this was not the primary focus for this action. Members were advised that surplus places were currently circa 40% at both schools.

A Member sought clarification on future transportation costs for pupils if the recommendations were accepted. Members were advised that both schools shared the same catchment area and that whilst a significant increase in transportation costs was not anticipated, that level of detail had not been assessed at this stage of the proposal.

The Headteacher of Lewis School, Pengam, outlined to Members the process which had been followed to reach the current stage. The four headteachers of the secondary schools in the Upper Rhymney Valley had been part of discussions for four years.

The Chair noted the transition period designed to minimise impact on exam pupils and allow staff/pupil integration and asked how long this period was likely to be in place. The

Headteacher of Lewis School Pengam outlined the level of collaboration between both schools which was already taking place at sixth-form level. Members heard how an appraisal on the length of time needed for transition would emerge after continuing discussions between the two schools. This was likely to be a number of years in the first instance. The Chief Education Officer also stressed the importance of staff well-being as part of any future consultation.

The Chair queried the future of the Lewis Girls School site if the plans to locate all the catchment pupils at the Lewis School Pengam site went ahead. Members were advised that there were a number of options and highlighted the significance of community consultation on any future plans. Members heard about health facility challenges in Ystrad Mynach, and that the lower playing fields at the girls' school was prone to flooding.

A Member sought clarification on the continuous professional development and training for staff if they moved from single sex provision to co-education. The Chief Education Officer provided assurances that this would be part of considerations within the 'team around the school' system to allow as smooth a transition as possible. The Headteacher of Lewis School Pengam advised that the majority of staff had backgrounds in co-education schools.

A Member enquired about the provision for ALN pupils in the plans for a new secondary school in Heolddu. Members were assured that ALN provision would be a key part of any future plans and highlighted that a full business case would have to be provided in order to obtain Welsh Government funding.

The Chair queried whether any modifications were needed at Lewis School Pengam if it moved from single sex provision to co-education. The Headteacher of Lewis School Pengam highlighted that there was sufficient capacity, the building was in good condition as it had only been built in 2004 and that co-education toilet facilities were already in place. Therefore, minimal modification would be required if the recommendations were accepted.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the unanimous support from the Post 16, Single Sex and Surplus Places Board (the Board) on the proposals set out within 5.7(1), 5.7(2) and 5.18(1) of the report, and commented on and scrutinised the content of the report and the stated proposals ahead of their consideration at Cabinet.

4. YOUTH FORUM PRIORITIES.

Councillor C. Andrews (Cabinet Member for Education and Communities) introduced the report which informed Members of the issues raised by Young People via the Youth Services Youth Forum and sought the views of Members prior to its presentation to Cabinet.

Members were given a presentation from the Vice Chair of the Youth Forum on the process of identifying priority issues, which included drugs, cost of living, personal safety, body image, and littering. Members were advised that the Youth Forum is currently undertaking a consultation on vaping and drugs and were informed on how the Youth Forum will address the priority issue.

A Member queried how the Council would be supporting the Youth Forum in achieving the priorities they have raised. Members were advised that the local authority youth service support the work of the youth forum and will work in partnership with the Police, Public Health Wales, and Healthy Schools, to raise awareness of the issues raised.

A Member asked the Vice Chair of the Youth Forum what he thought the attraction was with vaping and young people, and whether they had any health concerns. Members were advised that the style of company advertising was targeted at young people and noted that vapes should not be displayed in shops where they would be easily accessible by young people.

A Member queried whether the Youth Forum could refer the matter of vaping to their local MP or Senedd Member. Members were advised that this would be beneficial to the cause and the youth forum had already been working with Public Health Wales on this matter.

A Member sought clarification on where the data came from and how it is collated, including the information gathered from young people. The Member also noted that a petition of 50 to 100 signatures, if submitted to the Senedd, could result in the matter being raised and discussed within the Senedd. Members were advised that the statistics obtained were the results of the consultation that had been held online and through Borough wide meetings, in the Council Chamber every 2 months, and through surveys and workshops.

A Member noted that the issue of vaping had been raised in a recent Council meeting and that a Members seminar had been proposed on this matter. The Member also queried whether Members could attend a Youth Forum meeting. Members were advised they would be welcome to attend. Members were also advised that arrangements were being made for the Members seminar on vaping, and that the Youth Forum would be welcome to attend.

The Chair thanked the Vice Chair of the Youth Forum and Officers for their contribution.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation, this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee:

- a) Support the presentation of Youth Forum issues, by young people, to the Cabinet.
- b) Considered how to support the Youth Forum in addressing their Priority Issue.
- c) Have due regard to issues raised within this report by Young People when making decisions which impact upon their lives.

The meeting closed at 6.32 pm.

Approved as a correct record, subject to any amendments agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 20th May 2024.

CHAIR