



SPECIAL MEETING OF COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON TUESDAY 23RD OCTOBER 2012 AT 5.00PM

PRESENT:

Councillor Mrs. G. Oliver - Mayor
Councillor D.M. Gray - Deputy Mayor

Councillors:

Miss. L. Ackerman, M. Adams, Mrs. E.M. Aldworth, H.A. Andrews, A.P. Angel, Mrs. G. Bevan, J. Bevan, L. Binding, Mrs. A. Blackman, D. Bolter, D.G. Carter, Mrs. A. Collins, P. Cook, C.J. Cuss, H.W. David, W. David, H.R. Davies, D.T. Davies, R.T. Davies, K. Dawson, N. Dix, C. Durham, Mrs. D. Ellis, C. Elsbury, Mrs. C. Forehead, J.E. Fussell, Mrs. J. Gale, L. Gardiner, N. George, C.J. Gordon, Mrs. P. Griffiths, D.T. Hardacre, D. Havard, A.G. Higgs, G.J. Hughes, K. James, M.P. James, Mrs. B.A. Jones, G. Jones, Ms. J.G. Jones, G. Kirby, A. Lewis, K. Lloyd, C.P. Mann, S. Morgan, Mrs. R. Passmore, D.V. Poole, D.W.R. Preece, J. Pritchard, J.A. Pritchard, D. Rees, K.V. Reynolds, R. Saralis, Mrs. M.E. Sargent, Mrs J. Summers, L.G. Whittle, T.J. Williams, R. Woodyatt

Together with:

A. O'Sullivan (Chief Executive), N. Barnett (Deputy Chief Executive), S. Aspinall (Corporate Director Education and Lifelong Learning), A. Heaney (Corporate Director - Social Services), D. Perkins (Head of Legal Services and Governance), G. Williams (Principal Solicitor), N. Scammell (Head of Corporate Finance), K. Cole (Interim Manager, Learning, Education and Inclusion), D. Jones (Health and Safety Manager), B. Hopkins (Assistant Director Our Schools Our Future), H. Morgan (Senior Committee Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H.A. Andrews, Mrs. K.R. Baker, P.J. Bevan, Ms E. E. Forehead, R.W. Gough, C. Hawker, S. Jenkins, G. Johnston, S. Kent, M.J. Prew, Mrs. D. Price, J.E. Roberts and J. Taylor.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Mrs. P. Griffiths and D.W.R. Preece declared an interest in relation to Cwmcarn High School. Details are minuted with the respective item. The Head of Legal and Governance advised that Members who were school governors (other than of Cwmcarn High School) would not be required to declare an interest.

Members were advised that the report only deals with temporary arrangements until the end of the current academic year and that further reports will be prepared for Council to consider options for a longer term solution.

3. CWMCARN HIGH SCHOOL

Councillors Mrs. P. Griffiths and D.W.R Preece declared an interest (as her granddaughter is a pupil at the school and as a School Governor respectively) and left the Chamber when the item was being discussed.

Consideration was given to the report which sought approval to support the financial costs associated with ensuring the education of Cwmcarn High School pupils is delivered up to the end of the current academic year in the most appropriate way.

Mrs. Aspinall (Corporate Director Education and Lifelong Learning) advised that the report details information relating to the closure of Cwmcarn High School and a proposal for temporary arrangements. It does not and could not at this stage, deal with any other aspect of this matter. Further reports will be presented in due course.

Members were advised that following the receipt of a structural report on Friday 12th October 2012, parents were advised by letter that day that Cwmcarn High School would be closed with immediate effect, pending further detailed asbestos investigations. As a consequence of this decision, Officers have been working with the school's senior leadership team and governors to explore alternative arrangements for pupils and staff. As part of these deliberations, the health and wellbeing of both pupils and staff has been the foremost consideration, mindful of the need to ensure pupils are in receipt of suitable education as soon as is practically possible.

Reference was made to the number of options that had been brought forward (as detailed in the report) and the viability of each had been considered by the Schools Senior Leadership and Governing Body. The Governing Body was unanimous in favouring option 4, retaining all of the pupils at an alternative site (the former Ebbw Vale College) and the report detailed how this could be achieved.

During the course of the ensuing debate reference was made to school travel times and it was explained that when combining home to school and school to/from the Ebbw Vale campus travel times for many pupils would likely exceed 1 hour each way. It is anticipated that this will reduce for some pupils as the transport scheme is further developed to accommodate requirements.

Reference was also made to the financial implications and it was explained that the estimated cost of option 4 includes the re-commissioning of the Ebbw vale campus building, revenue/running costs and transport (this assumes Cwmcarn High School contribute towards the running costs of the Ebbw Vale campus). Mrs. Scammell explained that as detailed in the report a projected underspend on home to school transport for 2012/13 will be the first call on increased transport costs with the remainder being funded from general fund balances.

Members thanked Mrs. Aspinall for her informative presentation and wished to place on record their appreciation to the role played by Officers, Teachers, Governors, pupils and parents in bringing forward the report.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the report and in order to facilitate continuity in teaching and learning for all Cwmcarn High School pupils, the recommendation of Cwmcarn High Schools Governing Body to temporarily relocate to the Ebbw Vale campus of Coleg Gwent with effect from Monday, 5th November, 2012 for the remainder of the present academic year be supported and finance be allocated as detailed therein.

The meeting closed at 5.55pm

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 20th November 2012 on they were signed by the Mayor.

MAYOR