



CABINET

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN ON WEDNESDAY, 11TH JULY 2018 AT 2.00 P.M.

PRESENT

Councillor D.V. Poole – Chair

Councillors:

C. Cuss (Social Care and Wellbeing), N. George (Neighbourhood Services), C. Gordon (Cabinet Member for Corporate Services), B.A. Jones (Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Governance), Councillor S. Morgan (Economy, Infrastructure and Sustainability) and E. Stenner (Environment and Public Protection).

Together with:

C. Harrhy (Interim Chief Executive), R. Edmunds (Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services), M. S. Williams (Interim Corporate Director - Communities), S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy), R. Roberts (Performance Manager) and A. Dredge (Committee Services Officer),

1. WELCOME

the Chair welcomed Richard Edmunds, the newly appointed Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services to his first meeting of Cabinet.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P. Marsden (Cabinet Member for Education and Achievement) and L. Phipps (Cabinet Member for Homes and Places) and D. Street (Corporate Director – Social Services and Housing).

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor D. V. Poole (Leader) declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to agenda item 4 – Federation of Schools. Details of which are recorded with the respective item.

4. CABINET MINUTES - 27TH JUNE 2018

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 27th June 2018 were approved and signed as a correct record.

MATTERS ON WHICH EXECUTIVE DECISIONS WERE REQUIRED

5. FEDERATION OF SCHOOLS

Councillor D. V. Poole (Leader) declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to this item at the commencement of the meeting. He is a School Governor at both Fleur-de-lys Primary and Pengam Primary School and left the room when the report was presented and did not take part in the debate.

The report sought Cabinet approval to move to formal consultation, in partnership with each Governing Body, for the federation of the following schools:

Park Primary School and Gilfach Fargoed Primary School
Fleur-de-Lys Primary School and Pengam Primary School
Bedwas Junior School and Rhydri Primary School
Ynysddu Primary School and Cwmfelinfach Primary School.

Cabinet were advised of the background to the Welsh Government's Federation of Maintained Schools in Wales Regulations, introduced in 2014 that outlines the processes and practical aspects of establishing a federated school governing body. The report identifies the Schools and Governing Bodies who wish to proceed to formal consultation in partnership with the Local Authority. The report links directly to the Authority's Corporate Plan and specifically Well-being Objective 2018 – 2023, Improving Education Opportunities for All.

It was explained that the term 'Federation' describes a formal and legal agreement by which a number of schools share Governance arrangements. The Welsh Government's Federation policy objective is to promote collaboration between all parts of the education system to improve outcomes. School federation is a more formal way of extending collaboration and promoting closer working relationships and is the principal initiative for achieving formal partnership working amongst schools to improve performance and narrow the attainment gap for deprived pupils.

Reference was made to paragraph 4.3. in the report that summarises the Federation Regulations. Emphasis was placed on two key points namely, one governing body sharing governance arrangements and for the federation to be successful, a commitment to work as a group of schools and a willingness to do things differently for the added benefit of all pupils, their well-being and achievements. It was also explained that schools will retain their own budgets, individual school Estyn inspections will be undertaken and separate audit trails for school accounts will continue. Seeking the views of stakeholders is a statutory requirement.

Cabinet noted the benefits and challenges of federation. The benefits include schools working together efficiently and sustainably to raise standards, improve services and increase opportunities for pupils and staff, sharing resources, expertise and facilities. A single strategic Federation Governing Body means that the schools can work formally together to improve opportunities for children. The challenges include building trust between governors and school communities, a commitment from all schools involved, agreeing a shared vision and potential loss of experienced governors.

The composition of the governing body was explained and there will be a minimum of 15 and a maximum of 27 governors for each federation. Cabinet were advised of the current position of all 8 governing bodies and that each groups of schools have already been informally 'collaborating' for a number of years. The federation process was set out in paragraph 4.29 of the report and the next stage of the process is to move forward to formal Consultation for a period of 20 school days to receive governing body responses. Cabinet were referred to appendix 1 which is a sample document that will be adapted for each of the school federations.

Cabinet sought clarification regarding the Scrutiny function in terms of presenting reports for federated schools and questioned if this would be considered best practice. It was explained that individual school reports could be presented at the same Scrutiny meeting. Schools have been collaborating 'informally' for a number of years, sharing resources and staff. This process offers stability for the future as with the current arrangements schools can withdraw if they wish at any time without notice, as there is no formal agreement in place. Members were advised that Officers have met with school governors who saw the 'bringing together' as a positive move forward. The impetus has stemmed from the governing bodies. Estyn are also very keen to support federation for the educational benefits it brings and the sharing of resources that is already working very well.

Cabinet discussed the regulations and in particular schools retaining their Head Teachers or one Head Teacher managing the federated schools. It was confirmed that there are no proposals to change the current structure, however, the position would be quite different if a maximum of six schools were included in one federation.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's Report: -

- (i) the proposal to proceed to formal consultation to Federate the following groups of schools, be approved:

Park Primary School and Gilfach Fargoed Primary School.
Fleur de Lys Primary School and Pengam Primary School.
Bedwas Junior School and Rhydri Primary School.
Ynysddu Primary School and Cwmfelinfach Primary School.

- (ii) following the Consultation exercise, a further report be presented to Cabinet for final determination on the proposal.

6. 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION BAND A PROGRAMME – UPDATE AND PROPOSED ALLOCATION OF UNDERSPEND

The report updated Cabinet on the financial position of the Band A programme and sought agreement for the projected underspend to be allocated to a refurbishment project at Trinity Fields Special School, subject to approval of the business case by Welsh Government (WG).

Cabinet were advised that the Band A 21st Century Schools and Education Programme (2014-2019) approved an allocation of £56.5 million for improvement/new build schemes at the schools identified in paragraph 4.3 of the report. The current projected underspend on the programme is currently estimated at £940,120. Funding is on a 50/50 basis with Welsh Government and Caerphilly County Borough Council has already set aside its share of the £56.5 million sum.

Cabinet noted that whilst the projected underspend was an estimate an update had been received today and it was confirmed that the procurement process has been finalised and the overall project cost is now confirmed at £875,000. The estimate in respect of Blackwood Comprehensive School refurbishment plus 3G pitch was £65,000 more than predicted. A request has been made to Welsh Government for an additional allocation from the projected underspend to meet this increase. The decision will lie with the Capital Panel of Welsh Government who will discuss the request at their next meeting on Thursday 19th July 2018. The Local Authority will be notified of the decision of the panel by 23rd July.

Due to the limited timescales, it was not possible for the report to be considered by the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee. As the programme is nearing completion Welsh Government has requested all Local Authorities to identify alternative usage of any projected underspend.

In terms of the annual exercise undertaken each year to identify priority areas for School Capital Investment, it became apparent that Trinity Fields School required significant investment to meet the changing needs of the current and future School population. In the main this has arisen by the increasing complex needs of the pupils being admitted to the School. A number of meetings have already taken place involving officers across the Authority and School based staff which has initially identified areas of priority for spend at the School. Details of which were set out in paragraph 4.8. in the report.

It was explained that the Authority in partnership with the School through Capital Investment has already extended the provision available by providing two additional classrooms. This has allowed the Authority to accommodate the increasing number of pupils requiring specialist educational provision. Cabinet were pleased to note that the improvements to Trinity Fields will align with the further expansion of the School proposed within the 21st Century Band B programme and will also assist the Authority in meeting the requirements of the new Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Reform Bill. In addition, the works identified in paragraph 4.8 will be prioritised according to affordability. The budget that is available for the project will be restricted to a maximum of the confirmed underspend on the Band A programme. Cabinet wholly supported the proposals for the many benefits that can be offered to the increasing complex needs of the pupils being admitted to the School. Compliments were extended to the Head Teacher at Trinity Fields for his hard work and commitment to the School and pupils.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's Report: -

- (i) the projected underspend on the Band A 21st Century Schools Programme (currently estimated at £940,120) to be used for improvement works at Trinity Fields Special School, be approved;
- (ii) a detailed business case for use of this underspend incorporating full costings, be compiled and submitted to Welsh Government for consideration.

7. CORPORATE RISK REGISTER MONITORING (Q1 - 2018/19)

The report updated Cabinet with the Corporate Risk Register (CRR) in accordance with the Council's Risk Management Strategy, prior to its presentation to the Audit Committee. The report sets out the appropriate arrangements that are in place for the Council's Risk Management processes to be regularly and robustly monitored and scrutinised.

Cabinet were advised that Members have a critical role to play in evaluating the Council's Risk Management arrangements and in particular understanding how the Council identifies, manages and, where possible, mitigates/removes risk. Risk Management is crucial to the effective delivery of Council Services. The role of Cabinet and how the Corporate Risk Register is compiled was discussed.

It was explained that under the Council's Risk Management Strategy, the Corporate Management Team (CMT) monitors the Council's Corporate Risks, and the Audit Committee undertake the role of reviewing and challenging the Risk Register and where relevant, resultant action plans, for the Council's key strategic and Corporate Risks. The Corporate Risk Register is a 'living document' and may change when periodically reviewed and

assessed. New risks introduced, existing risks closed, risk levels change (RAG) (red/amber/green), mitigating actions and progress comments updated. In moving forward, Cabinet will receive six monthly progress reports on the Corporate Risk Register. A summary of the main changes was provided and it was confirmed that no new risks had been identified since the last meeting of Cabinet held on the 14th February 2018.

Clarification was sought in relation to CMT42 – Exit from EU (risk removed). It was explained that elements of EU funding had been moved to the budget linked to the MTFP due to the uncertainty of future EU funding. Concerns were expressed in relation to CMT39 – Fragility of the Social Care Market, in that the Domiciliary Care Framework Report was deferred from the Health Social Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on the 19th June 2018. In the absence of the Corporate Director for Social Services and Housing, an update was not available as to when the report will be considered once again by the Scrutiny Committee.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's Report, the Corporate Risk Register be endorsed prior to the update being presented to the Audit Committee.

The meeting closed at 2.35pm.

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 25th July 2018.

CHAIR