



EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE REMOTE MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON MONDAY, 22ND MARCH 2021 AT 5.30PM

PRESENT:

Councillor T. Parry - Chair
Councillor C. Andrews - Vice-Chair

Councillors:

Mrs E. M. Aldworth, C. Andrews (Vice-Chair), P. J. Bevan, A. Collis, W. David, A. Farina-Childs, Ms J. Gale, D. Havard, M. P. James, B. Miles, Mrs T. Parry (Chair), J. E. Roberts, and J. Simmonds.

Councillor R. Whiting (Cabinet Member for Learning and Achievement).

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), A. West (21st Century Schools Manager), L. Thomas (21st Century Schools Principal Officer), J. Lougher (Sport and Development Manager), S. Ellis (Lead for Inclusion and ALN), R. Kyte (Head of Regeneration and Planning), J. Southcombe (Finance Manager), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Manager), M. Jacques (Scrutiny Officer), S. Hughes (Committee Services Officer) and M. Harris (Committee Services Support Officer).

Also present:

Co-opted Members: Mr M. Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education Representative), Mrs T. Millington (Parent Governor Representative) and Mr G. James (Parent Governor Representative).

Also in Attendance:

S. Lowe (Penallta RFC), N. Sargent (Save Ystrad Green Spaces Group), A. Hurst (Vice-Chair of Governors at Trinity Fields School), J. Rogers (Parent Governor at Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Gwyddon), Cllr A. Whitcombe (Ward Member for Abercarn) and R. Instone (Cwmarn Resident).

RECORDING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chairperson reminded those present that the meeting was being recorded and 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 Councillors C. Cuss, D. T. Hardacre and Mrs G. D. Oliver.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor W. David declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item 7 (21st Century Schools and Education Band B Programme - Statutory Objection Report for Trinity Fields School). Details are minuted with the respective item.

3. MINUTES – 11TH JANUARY 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 11th January 2021 (minute nos 1- 10) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CALL-IN PROCEDURE

There had been no matters referred to the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the call-in procedure.

5. EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report which outlined details of the Education Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme (FWP) for the period March 2021 to March 2022 and included all reports that were identified at the Education Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 11th January 2021. Members were asked to consider the Forward Work Programme, alongside the Cabinet Forward Work Programme, prior to publication on the Council's website.

It was proposed that a report on the New Curriculum for Wales be added to the Education Scrutiny Forward Work Programme. Members were advised that the Education Achievement Service (EAS) will be delivering a seminar on this topic early in the summer term, which can be followed up with a report on the progress in Caerphilly.

Following consideration of the report, and subject to the additional report proposed, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of electronic voting this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the Education Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme be published on the Councils' website.

6. CABINET REPORTS

None of the Cabinet reports listed on the agenda had been called forward for discussion at the meeting.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

7. 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION BAND B PROGRAMME - STATUTORY OBJECTION REPORT FOR TRINITY FIELDS SCHOOL

Councillor W. David declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item 7 (21st Century Schools and Education Band B Programme - Statutory Objection Report for Trinity Fields School) as a family relative and close friend is the Vice President of Penallta Rugby Club, also his son has written a letter supporting some of the objectors views. Councillor W. David left the meeting when the item was discussed.

The Cabinet Member for Learning and Achievement presented the report to update Members in relation to the 21st Century School Band B proposal in respect of Trinity Fields School. Members were reminded that the proposal is to expand the existing Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre, in Ystrad Mynach, via a new building extension and outdoor play space with an anticipated completion date of September 2023. Members were advised that the proposed new building will provide additional facilities to accommodate growing demand for places and provide additional classrooms, specialist intervention areas and outdoor play space. It was proposed the additional facility will also house a new flexible hall, hydrotherapy pool and soft play facilities to increase provision on site which will also be considered for community use at suitable times in keeping with the curriculum timetable. It was highlighted that these developments will ensure that the school can cater for the changing and more complex needs of pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) across the Council, both now and in the future and ensure compliance with the new Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act.

The mitigation proposals for the pitch at Trinity 1 were summarised and Members were advised that a full mitigation report was attached as Appendix 3. Reference was made to the sewerage briefing paper attached to the report as Appendix 4.

The Scrutiny Committee received representations from S. Lowe (Penallta RFC) and N. Sargent (Save Ystrad Green Spaces Group), who outlined their objections to the 21st Century Schools and Education Band B proposal in respect of Trinity Fields School. A. Hurst (Vice Chair of Governors at Trinity Fields School) addressed the Scrutiny Committee in support of the 21st Century Schools and Education Band B proposal in respect of Trinity Fields School. The 21st Century Schools Manager delivered a presentation on the Objection Report and supporting documentation in relation to Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre.

Members discussed the report at length. During the course of the debate, points of clarification were requested on various aspects of the report and Officers responded to the points raised.

Clarification was sought in relation to the 238 objections received and a breakdown was requested under the five objection areas listed in the report. Further information was sought on the number of objections received concerning open space and loss of sporting facilities. The 21st Century Schools Manager advised the Scrutiny Committee that this information was not available during the meeting but would be provided to Members.

Concerns were expressed regarding the proposed mitigations. In response to a Member's query regarding the size of the Trinity 1 (T1) and Trinity 2 (T2) sports pitches, the Sport and Development Manager confirmed that the T2 pitch is smaller, however the mitigation measure for the loss of T1 is the additional pitch at the Sue Noake Leisure Centre. The Head of Regeneration and Planning advised that all sports pitches are subject to the requirements of the County-wide Policy 8 in the Local Development Plan, therefore there would have to be sufficient mitigation to justify the loss of T1 as it is not surplus to requirement. The Member also raised concerns in relation to T3, which would be an attenuation area for storm water, and anticipated that it would become unusable at times of flooding.

One Member raised a number of questions regarding the additional facilities proposed for the expansion of Trinity Fields School, particularly in relation to a proposed Children's Centre on the site. During the course of the discussion reference was made to the consultation process and concerns were expressed in that the authority had not consulted with the wider community. The 21st Century Schools Manager advised that the consultation list is stipulated by the Welsh Government and the pupil voice from the school affected is required to be heard as part of the consultation process. Members were advised that the list of consultees required was provided in the School Organisation Code 2018.

During the course of the debate, points of clarification were requested on various aspects of the report and the Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services responded to the points raised. In response to a query in relation to parking facilities at Sue Noake Leisure Centre, Members were advised that parking would be a matter for the Planning Committee. Clarification was also provided on the mitigation measures and it was explained that an additional equivalent pitch in the locality (Sue Noake 2) was the proposed mitigation for the plans to repurpose Trinity 1, in addition to a number of additional improvement measures at both Trinity 2, Trinity 3 and Sue Noake, as outlined in the Objection Report and supporting Mitigation Paper. Further to this it was outlined that the Council had worked with Penallta RFC in order to identify additional enhancements to the pitch at Sue Noake 1, including a hard standing, barrier provision, emergency vehicle access, significant enhancements to the changing facilities to bring two additional changing rooms back into use and a medical first aid room.

In response to a Member's query regarding the provision of a new or additional school, the 21st Century Schools Manager advised that both options had been considered as part of an options appraisal at Welsh Government business case stage, but the preferred scored option was the expansion of the existing school site. The Member questioned the quality of ALN satellite facilities across the County Borough and suggested that a new school would be a better option. The Lead for Inclusion and ALN emphasised that the needs of the pupils and discussions with parents are key factors in placing pupils as part of a rigorous process that had been followed throughout the development of the hub and spoke model and how plans to enhance provision at both Trinity Fields and the satellite provision meets the requirements set out in the ALN Act.

A Motion was put forward asking to delay the decision to allow for the costings for a new school to be presented in a review. The Head of Education Planning and Strategy advised Members that the proposal had been brought to the Education Scrutiny Committee on two previous occasions and that the Business Case process to Welsh Government had been approved for this expansion. It was outlined how a further Options Appraisal and another Business Case would have to be developed if the Motion put forward was passed and that this would significantly delay the process. The Officer advised that the Options Appraisal that had been discussed on two previous occasions had included an option for a newbuild school. The Options Appraisal had discounted this option. The 21st Century Schools Manager reminded Members that the decision to proceed with the expansion of Trinity Fields School was the result of a recommendation from a cross-party working group which looked at all options across the borough as part of the Band B programme. Members heard how this decision predated the request to proceed to a Business Case, although each proposal is considered on its own merit and subject to full scrutiny and approval by Cabinet and Welsh Government.

The Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services advised Members that the Education Scrutiny Committee had voted previously on this matter as part of the process and it was recommended to proceed to statutory consultation phase with the preferred option being Option 4. It was highlighted that no Members voted against the recommendation at that time. During the course of the debate, in response to a Member's claim that he had previously voted against the recommendation, the Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services confirmed that the record showed that there were 13 votes in favour and 2

abstentions when the decision was brought before the Education Scrutiny Committee at their November 2020 meeting.

A motion was moved and seconded to amend the recommendations to delay the decision for further review, as there are no costings for a new school. By way of verbal roll call voting, the motion was declared lost.

Assurances were sought on the mitigation measures before a vote was taken on the report's recommendation. The Head of Regeneration and Planning assured Members that this would be a fundamental part of the Planning Application.

It was moved and seconded that for the reasons given in the Officers report the recommendations contained therein be approved. By way of verbal roll call voting, this was approved by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the Education Scrutiny Committee: -

- a) endorsed the recommendations made within the Objection Report prior to consideration by Cabinet on 7th April, 2021.
- b) endorsed the proposed mitigations and the proposal to fund the estimated cost of £300k from the 2020/21 Miscellaneous Finance Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay (RCCO) budget.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

It was moved and seconded to suspend Standing Orders to allow the meeting to proceed beyond 3 hours. By way of Microsoft Forms voting, this was unanimously agreed.

8. 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION BAND B PROGRAMME - STATUTORY OBJECTION REPORT FOR YSGOL GYMRAEG CWM GWYDDON

The Cabinet Member for Learning and Achievement introduced the report to update Members in relation to the 21st Century Schools Band B Proposals in respect of Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Gwyddon. Members were reminded that the proposal is to relocate 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 with an anticipated occupation date of September 2023. Members were informed that as part of the proposal the new building will incorporate a primary facility with Childcare, Special Resource Base (SRB), Nursery, Rising Threes and main school classrooms, main assembly hall, food technology space, a library and IT space and it will also improve the outdoor learning space by including external play areas, a MUGA and access to a grass pitch. Members were also informed that the identified site will have sufficient accommodation to facilitate a new building that will provide accommodation for approximately 420 pupils plus 60 nursery places and 16 SRB places. It was emphasised that the proposed project will consider the desire to encourage and facilitate community use of the asset. The design process will seek to include measures to enable safe 'zoning' of parts of the new school building, sports facilities, including the hall and a multi-functional classroom compliant space which could be adapted for community use.

Members were advised that the proposals went to Statutory Notice on 11th January 2021 and was open for objections until 7th February and in total there were 2 objections. It was highlighted that the key areas of objection were mainly in relation to the prioritisation of Welsh Medium education, and a perceived need for an additional secondary school in the area. Members were further advised that responses to each of the objections could be found in the Objection Report at Appendix 1.

J. Rogers (Parent Governor at Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Gwyddon), Councillor A. Whitcombe (Ward Member for Abercarn) and R. Instone (a resident of Cwmcarn) addressed the Scrutiny Committee to present their views.

The 21st Century Schools Manager delivered a presentation on the Objection Report and supporting documentation in relation to Ysgol Cymraeg Cwm Gwyddon. It was emphasised that there were only two objections received. Members were informed that during the consultation period 388 views were received of which 367 were positive, 13 negative and 8 neutral or no response. Clarification was provided in relation to people who had concerns prior to any documentation being published and, based on the fact that there were only two objections received, it was assumed that any concerns they had were alleviated and not carried forward. Some of the key points which were emphasised in the Objection Report were highlighted to Members.

The 21st Century Schools Manager also provided a response in relation to financial investment for English Medium schools within the locality and it was confirmed that there had been an investment of circa £6.2m into the English Medium schools over the last ten years.

In response to a query regarding future expansion opportunities for English-language provision on the site, the 21st Century Schools Manager advised Members that there was no evidence to suggest a need for expansion of English-medium schools. It was confirmed that there was adequate provision to accommodate catchment demand and that there were surplus places in both Primary and Secondary provision.

It was moved and seconded that for the reasons given in the Officers report the recommendations contained therein be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms voting, this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the Education Scrutiny Committee: -

- a) endorsed the recommendations made within the Objection Report prior to consideration by Cabinet on 7th April, 2021.

9. BUDGET MONITORING 2020/21 (PERIOD 9).

The Cabinet Member for Learning and Achievement presented the report to inform Members of the projected 2020-21 outturn position for the Directorate of Education and Lifelong Learning based on the most recent information available and to propose the use of reserves for specific purposes detailed within the report. It was highlighted that the report identified projected under / overspends currently forecast for 2020-21, together with an update with regards to any issues relating to the progress of the 2020/21 savings targets. In addition, the report gave an outline of financial issues linked to COVID-19.

Members were informed that, in summary, the current projected outturn position for Education and Lifelong Learning is an underspend of £1,288k. The projected outturn position for Corporate Services is an underspend of £1,082k, consequently overall the projected outturn position for Education and Corporate Services is an underspend of £2,370k. The report also included proposals for the use of reserves in specific areas and the Scrutiny Committee was asked to consider these prior to the proposals being presented to Cabinet.

Clarification and information were sought in relation to the proposal to utilise the reserves for specific projects. The Finance Manager acknowledged that there are a number of projects that are being looked at within the Directorate, however a 2nd Satellite Class at St Cenydd Comprehensive for Trinity Fields and the development of Virginia Park for both the Youth Service and EOTAS provision were identified to support the most vulnerable learners within the borough.

It was moved and seconded that for the reasons given in the Officers report the recommendations contained therein be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms voting, this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the Education Scrutiny Committee:

- a) Noted the content of the report.
- b) Supported a recommendation to Cabinet to utilise £472k of Corporate Services Capital Earmarked Reserves for a 2nd Satellite Class at St Cenydd Comprehensive for Trinity Fields, and the development of Virginia Park for both the Youth Service and EOTAS provision as detailed in Section 5.5 of the report.

The meeting closed at 8:25 pm.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 17th May 2021 they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR