



SPECIAL EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL REMOTE MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON THURSDAY, 25TH MARCH 2021 AT 5.30PM

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

Mrs E. M. Aldworth, P. J. Bevan, A. Collis, C. Cuss, A. Farina-Childs, Ms J. Gale, D. Havard, B. Miles, J. E. Roberts and J. Simmonds.

Cabinet Member: Councillor S. Cook

Together with:

Officers: R. Edmunds (Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services), S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy), J. Southcombe (Finance Manager), A. West (21st Century Schools Manager), P. Warren (Strategic Lead for School Improvement), S. Ellis (Lead for Inclusion and ALN), M. Jacques (Scrutiny Officer), C. Evans (Committee Services Officer), J. Lloyd (Committee Services Officer) and M. Harris (Committee Support Officer/ Chauffer).

Also present:

Co-opted Members: Mr M. Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education Representative), Mrs T. Millington (Parent Governor Representative), Mr G. James (Parent Governor Representative), Mrs P. Ireland (NEU) and Mr D. Davies (Caerphilly Governors Association).

Also in Attendance:

R. Simms (EAS) and E. Pryce (EAS)

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 Mrs G. D. Oliver and W. David.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES BAND B PROGRAMME – PHASE 2 PROPOSAL FOR PLASYFELIN PRIMARY

The report sought the views of the Education Scrutiny Committee on the next stage (Phase 2) of the 21st Century Schools and Colleges Band B programme.

It was noted that there are 3 projects identified as part of Phase 2, one of which is the Plasyfelin Primary school proposal, which was outlined within the Officers Report.

The report provided an update to Members on the current position of the Band B (£78 million) 21st Century School and Colleges Capital Programme.

Plasyfelin Primary School has been identified as part of the 21st Century Schools and Colleges Band B Phase 2 programme.

Members noted the proposal to build a new and enlarged replacement school in the grounds of the existing school site, to accommodate future projected demand within the area. The new school will provide 420 pupil places plus nursery.

It was noted that the project outlined in 2.3 of the report is in the early developmental stage and officers will ensure that Members are updated on a regular basis in relation to all aspects of the proposal and processes in line with the requirements of the School Organisation Code 2018 and the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked the Officer for the report and discussion ensued.

Members discussed the report at length and sought clarification on a number of points, including the consultation process and community use of facilities, for which Officers provided a response and it was noted that the Headteacher has been consulted as well as the local Member to determine what facilities would meet the needs of the school and communities.

A Committee Member sought reassurance that the school would-be built-in line with sustainability and green credentials and Officers explained that work is underway to explore the possibility of building a net zero carbon school.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. By way of electronic voting via Microsoft Teams Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the Education Scrutiny Committee:

- i) The report be noted;
- ii) The recommendation to proceed to Welsh Government Business Case Stage on Plasyfeliin Primary School be endorsed prior to consideration by Cabinet on 7th April 2021.

4. 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION BAND B PROGRAMME – PHASE 2 LLANCAEACH JUNIOR SCHOOL AND LLANFABON INFANTS SCHOOL

The report sought the views of the Education Scrutiny Committee on the next stage (Phase 2) of the 21st Century Schools and Colleges Band B programme.

It was noted that there are 3 projects identified as part of Phase 2, one of which is the Llancaeath Junior School and Llanfabon Infants School proposal, as outlined within the Officers report.

The report provided an update to Members on the current position of the Band B (£78 million) 21st Century School and Colleges Capital Programme.

It was noted that the Llancaeath Junior School and Llanfabon Infants Schools have been identified as part of the 21st Century Schools and Colleges Band B Phase 2 programme.

The proposal is to amalgamate Llancaeath Junior School and Llanfabon Infants School via the expansion and refurbishment of the existing Llanfabon Infants site to accommodate the new Primary School with places for 275 pupils plus nursery.

The project outlined in 2.3 of the Officers report is in early developmental stage and officers will ensure that Members are updated on a regular basis in relation to all aspects of the proposal and processes in line with the requirements of the School Organisation Code 2018 and the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked the Cabinet Member for the report and discussion ensued.

In noting the proposal, a Member sought assurance that the new premises would be built to be cost effective and provide suitable indoor and outdoor spaces for learning. Officers assured the Committee that all our new build schools are built to a high standard and gave the example of Idris Davies 3 – 18 school. It was also confirmed that an area which is currently outside the school gate but is in Council ownership had been earmarked to be utilised for car parking facilities in the proposal

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. By way of a roll call voting process this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the Education Scrutiny Committee:

- i) The report be noted;
- ii) The recommendation to proceed to Welsh Government Business Case Stage on Llancaeath Junior School and Llanfabon Infants School be endorsed prior to consideration by Cabinet on 7th April 2021.

5. 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION BAND B PROGRAMME – PHASE 2 PROPOSAL FOR A CENTRE FOR VULNERABLE LEARNERS

The report sought the views of the Education Scrutiny Committee on the next stage (Phase 2) of the 21st Century Schools and Colleges Band B programme.

It was noted that there 3 projects identified as part of Phase 2, one of which is the Centre for Vulnerable Learners proposal, as outlined within the Officers report.

The report provided an update to Members on the current position of the Band B (£78 million) 21st Century School and Colleges Capital Programme.

The Centre for Vulnerable Learners has been identified as part of the 21st Century Schools and Colleges Band B Phase 2 programme.

The proposal is to adapt and refurbish the old grammar school building, formerly part of the Pontllanfraith High School site, to accommodate creating a new Centre for Vulnerable Learners.

The project outlined in 2.3 of the Officers Report is in early developmental stage and officers will ensure that Members are updated on a regular basis in relation to all aspects of the proposal and processes.

For the purposes of reporting to Welsh Government, the Centre for Vulnerable Learners will be referred to in the business case and supporting documentation as a Pupil Referral Unit.

It was noted that Pupil Referral Units (PRU) are exempt from the consultation processes outlined in line School Organisation Code 2018 and the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked the Cabinet Member for the report and discussion ensued.

The Scrutiny Committee discussed the report and proposals at length and sought clarification on the pupils accessing the PRU. Officers confirmed that pupils from across the Caerphilly Borough will be able to access and utilise the facilities where appropriate.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. By way of a roll call voting process this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the Education Scrutiny Committee:

- i) The report be noted;
- ii) The recommendation to proceed to Welsh Government Business Case Stage on the Centre for Vulnerable Learners Proposal be endorsed prior to consideration by Cabinet on 7th April 2021.

6. EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT SERVICE (EAS) BUSINESS PLAN 2021-2022

The report provided the Education Scrutiny Committee with the Education Achievement Service (EAS) Business Plan 2021-2022.

It was noted that the EAS are required to submit an overarching regional Business Plan on an annual basis. The report sought members consideration and comment on the full contents of the draft EAS Business Plan as part of the regional consultation process.

The document contained the main priorities that the EAS believe will be relevant to focus upon in the next iteration of the regional Business Plan for 2021-2022. It is challenging to try to predict the way in which society will be operating from summer 2021 with regards to managing the spread of coronavirus. The priorities contained within the document assume that the EAS will build upon the learning and momentum from the past few months.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked the Cabinet Member for the report and discussion ensued.

The Committee discussed the report at length and Officers provided the Committee with some key points and main priorities within the report. Members sought clarification on Strategic Priorities and Quality Leadership and Officers provided a detailed explanation on the work

undertaken by Headteachers, Governors and Leaders within school when managing education settings during a pandemic, as well as the best practice sharing exercises that have been undertaken. Officers confirmed that Governors play a key role in this, as well as Headteachers and staff. It was noted however, that whilst the work has been exceptional, there is always room for improvement and encouraged Members as Governors to provide any feedback they may have in order to continue along the journey of improvement and best practice.

The Committee thanked the Officer for the report and added their thanks as Governors for his support whenever requested.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. By way of a roll call voting process this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the Education Scrutiny Committee:

- i) The information within the Business Plan be considered and noted;
- ii) The main strengths and areas for development within Caerphilly be considered and noted.

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