



CABINET - 29TH OCTOBER 2014

SUBJECT: ABERTYSSWG/PONTLOTTYN PRIMARY: FORMAL CONSULTATION PROCESS

REPORT BY: ACTING DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To update Members in respect of the 21st Century Schools Rhymney 3-18 proposal.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 The report proposes the commencement of statutory processes with a formal consultation.

2.2 The report illustrates proposed timescales for the project.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

3.1 The report links directly to the Education for Life, sustainability and regeneration strategies, particularly in the context of provision of modern fit for purpose teaching and learning environments.

4. THE REPORT

4.1 Council, at its meeting on 3 November 2011, approved a £12m bid to Welsh Government (WG) in respect of a Rhymney 3-18 development. The bid was submitted by the due date of 18 November 2011 and was subsequently approved by WG on 5 December 2011.

4.2 The bid proposal involved rationalising up to 3 existing primary schools (Abertysswg, Pontlottyn and possibly Fochriw) into 1 new primary school.

4.3 The scheme also proposed developing community facilities in an area of high social deprivation, as well as upgrading existing facilities on the Rhymney Comprehensive site, where the new school would be co-located.

4.4 The proposal offered the potential for:

- all age transformation
- local regeneration
- state of the art resources in the local community
- opportunities to explore new models of governance, e.g. federation.

4.5 The features of the 3 present primary schools are as follows:

	Abertysswg	Pontlottyn	Fochriw
Condition Rating	B	C	C
Disabled Access	D	D	A
DDA Compliant	D	D	D
25 Year Maintenance	571k	820k	576k
Surplus Places	38	35	31
Fit for Purpose (size compliant) classrooms	17%	40%	100%
Pupil Numbers (excluding nursery)	108	102	89

4.6 Informal consultations have taken place over the last couple of years. In the summer term 2014, it was proposed to establish local stakeholder groups in the communities of Fochriw, Abertysswg and Pontlottyn, although in the latter case there were no expressions of interest.

4.7 In relation to Fochriw, a stakeholder group met and agreed to consult with the whole community.

4.8 The survey documentation is attached as Appendix 1.

4.9 The consultation period ended 25th July. 111 of 529 questionnaire's were returned (21%), containing 166 names.

4.10 A total of 16 (14.4%) agreed with the proposal, whilst 95 (85.6%) did not agree with the proposal.

4.11 The top 3 reasons given for agreeing with the proposal were:

- Will have a state of the art school (10)
- Will have better facilities (9)
- Will receive a better education (9)

The top 3 reasons given for not agreeing with the proposal were:

- Transport – adverse weather conditions, pupil illness and collection (60)
- Transport of young children (50)
- Effect on/loss of community identity (48)

4.12 In relation to Abertysswg, separate meetings were convened with representatives of the Save Abertysswg School Committee and the Governing Body.

4.13 The meeting with the Committee was overall positive, whereas the Governing Body represented more of a mixed response.

4.14 The main concerns expressed were:

- Greater distance to walk to school, often in adverse weather
- Loss of community identity, without school as main focus
- Potential impact on Flying Start, e.g. Fochriw and Abertysswg have it, but Pontlottyn do not
- After use of existing school building.

4.15 It is acknowledged that the inclusion of Fochriw pupils within the new school proposal represents difficulties, including those evidenced during the survey, e.g. CCBC has recognised the transport problems by providing free school transport for secondary aged pupils to Rhymney Comprehensive since 1996.

- 4.16 In view of the outcomes of the informal processes, it is proposed to develop the new primary school for Abertysswg and Pontlottyn only and exclude Fochriw. Welsh Government officials have indicated that the recommended proposal is viable and should accord with grant conditions.
- 4.17 There will be a need to separately consider federation options for Fochriw Primary for the future.
- 4.18 The Welsh Government issued regulations earlier in 2014, accompanied by statutory guidance and advice.
- 4.19 The term federation describes a formal and legal agreement by which a number of schools (between two and six) share governance arrangements and have a single governing body.
- 4.20 The arrangement allows schools to work together through a formal structured process by sharing a governing body that will make decisions in the best interests of all the schools, staff and pupils in that federation.
- 4.21 The guidance stipulates matters such as:
- Limits on the number of schools that can federate together
 - The numbers of governors
 - Definition of small school.
- 4.22 A process will commence in the next few months to consider these options and Members will receive further information at that stage.
- 4.23 The pupil projections (number on roll, excluding nursery), for Abertysswg and Pontlottyn are as follows:

	Abertysswg	Pontlottyn	Total
2014	111	90	201
2015	119	95	214
2016	120	103	223
2017	112	104	216
2018	110	108	218
2019	108	116	224

The nursery year group numbers are circa 30-40 per annum.

- 4.24 Based upon an average class size of 25, the school is envisaged as 9 classrooms, plus nursery.
- 4.25 Should Members agree the revised proposal, then the possible timescales could be as follows:

Cabinet decision re whether to proceed to formal processes	29 October 2014
Issue consultation document/formal consultation process	17 November – 31 December 2014
Report outcomes of consultation to Cabinet	4 February 2015
Statutory Notice	2 – 30 March 2015
Final decision by Cabinet (assumes no WG call-in)	2 June 2015
Design	January – May 2015
Tender (SEWSCAP)	June/July/August 2015
Project Build	September 2015 – December 2016
School Opening	January 2017

- 4.26 On this basis, it is envisaged that the WG business cases would be completed, circa as follows:

Strategic Outline Case (SOC)	October 2014
Outline Business Case (OBC)	February 2015
Full Business Case (FBC)	January 2016
Business Justification Case (BJC)(if required)	January 2016

NB. WG are presently reviewing business case processes.

- 4.27 It is envisaged at this early stage that the main risk factors associated with the proposal are:

Risk	Category
Failure to secure CCBC political approval	Low
Failure to secure WG funding approval re business cases	Low
Significant opposition to proposal, resulting in WG determination	Medium
Facilitating safe routes to schools via land acquisition	Medium
Difficulty in developing preferred site	Low

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Impact Assessment screening has been completed in accordance with the Council's Strategic Equality Plan and no potential for unlawful discrimination has been initially identified affecting one or more of the target equality groups.
- 5.2 This will require more detailed work as the proposal evolves. An Equalities Impact Assessment will be formulated during the formal consultation process and will evolve through the process to school opening which is anticipated for 1 January 2017.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Members will note that the original WG approval amounted to £12m.
- 6.2 The original bid was based on a larger Primary school, to incorporate Fochriw pupils. It is anticipated the build costs for the smaller school will be much lower than the original estimate of £12m.
- 6.3 The Council has already secured its £6m (50%) share of the match funding for this scheme.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 It is proposed to develop a voluntary agreement amongst the 2 schools with the intention to minimise any compulsory redundancies. This agreement would typically involve limiting permanent appointments over the next 2 years.
- 7.2 The Council will also deploy its other procedures in conjunction with this agreement, e.g. redeployment, cross-matching arrangements.
- 7.3 It is expected that these initiatives will minimise costs for CCBC, but it is too early to quantify such details. These will become more evident following conclusion of the statutory processes and in the lead up to January 2017.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 The draft report was distributed as detailed below. All comments received have been reflected in the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 Members are requested to agree to proceed with the proposal to establish a primary school for Abertysswg and Pontlottyn, but not Fochriw, on the Rhymney Comprehensive site.
- 9.2 Members to consider the precise funding implications, following the formal consultation processes.
- 9.3 Members agree that federation arrangements be considered for Fochriw Primary School for the future.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To provide an improved teaching and learning environment as per SOP2 bid in 2011.
- 10.2 To reduce English Medium primary surplus school places in line with WG's expectations.
- 10.3 To agree to proceed to statutory processes.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 The School Standards and Framework Act 1998.
The Education (Maintained Special Schools) (Wales) Regulations 1999
The Learning and Skills Act 2000
The School Organisation Code. Welsh Government (2013)
Federation of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2014.

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Mike Lewis, Principal Accountant – Education Central
Sarah Mutch, Flying Start Co-ordinator.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Survey details

Background Papers:

21st Century Schools files

Council report 23 November 2010 (SOP)

Council report 3 November 2011 (SOP2)

Welsh Government approval letter 5 December 2011.

Federation process of maintained schools in Wales : Guidance for governing bodies and local authorities.