



EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE REMOTE MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON MONDAY, 10TH JANUARY 2022 AT 5.30PM

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

Mrs E. M. Aldworth, P. J. Bevan, A. Collis, W. David, A. Farina-Childs, D. Havard, B. Miles, J. E. Roberts and Mrs J. Stone.

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

Together with:

Officers: R. Edmunds (Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services), S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy), K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), A. West (21st Century Schools Manager), L. Thomas (21st Century Schools - Principal Officer), P. Warren (Strategic Lead for School Improvement), S. Ellis (Lead for Inclusion and ALN), 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:

Councillor J. Pritchard.

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 D. T. Hardacre, M. P. James, Mrs B. A. Jones, Mrs G. D. Oliver and J. Simmonds.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor J. Pritchard declared an interest in Agenda Item No. 9 – 21st Century Schools and Colleges Band B Programme - Community Engagement Report: Plasyfelin Primary School, as Vice Chair of Governors at Plasyfelin Primary School. It was noted that Councillor J. Pritchard was in attendance to observe the meeting. Details are also minuted with the respective item.

3. MINUTES – 2ND NOVEMBER 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Tuesday 2nd November 2021 (minute nos 1- 10) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. MINUTES – 2ND DECEMBER 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Special meeting of the Education Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Thursday 2nd December 2021 (minute nos 1- 3) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. 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.

6. EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report which outlined details of the Education Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the period January 2022 to March 2022 and included all reports that were identified at the Education Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 2nd November 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 provision of Welsh-medium teaching staff be added to the Education Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme.

It was also proposed that when the Education Scrutiny Committee considers the report on the Welsh Curriculum, Members be given the opportunity to look at Humanities which covers the teaching of history in schools.

Following consideration of the report, and subject to the changes proposed, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 13 votes for, 1 vote against and no abstentions) this was agreed by the majority.

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

7. 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.

8. **21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES BAND B PROGRAMME - CONSULTATION REPORT: LLANCAEACH JUNIOR SCHOOL/LLANFABON INFANTS SCHOOL**

The Cabinet Member for Learning and Leisure introduced the report to update Scrutiny Members in relation to the 21st Century Schools Band B proposal in respect of the amalgamation of Llancaeath Junior School and Llanfabon Infants School to create a new Primary School provision. Members were advised that the 21st Century Schools Band B proposals went to formal consultation between the 20th October 2021 and the 1st December 2021 and responses were encouraged from members of the public, the school community, elected members and other stakeholders, including Estyn. Reference was made to the Consultation Report attached as Appendix 1 to the report, which summarised each of the issues raised by the consultees.

A Member raised a number of points in relation to the Consultation Report and commented that an overall total of 11 responses received during the consultation process was a bit disappointing. The 21st Century Schools Manager delivered a summary presentation on the Consultation Report to answer some of the points raised. The Member noted that the proposal took suitable account of the most recent Estyn reports for each of the two schools and clarification and further information were sought in relation to the quality of leadership and management and the structure of the governing body. The 21st Century Schools Manager advised the Scrutiny Committee that the governing body would be established if the proposal progressed. Officers would work with the existing governing bodies to ensure a smooth transition and, if necessary, form an early collaboration. The Chief Education Officer advised the Scrutiny Committee that there were no concerns in relation to leadership at either school. Members heard how the reasons for amalgamation were driven by geography rather than any issues of leadership.

The Member also sought clarification in relation to the impact of the proposals on children with Special Educational Needs. The Lead for Inclusion and ALN advised the Scrutiny Committee that the impact of transition was critical in this regard and that this would be work undertaken by the Council when a decision was reached on amalgamation. The 21st Century Schools Manager also highlighted that the pupils from Llancaeath Junior School with Special Educational Needs would already be familiar with Llanfabon Infants School because they had attended this site since nursery, therefore the element of change would be very small.

In response to a Members query, the 21st Century Schools Manager provided assurances that the Building Consultancy Team would be involved with these proposals and highlighted the experience that they would bring to the projects being discussed.

Following consideration of the report it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that prior to a report being presented to Cabinet, the Education Scrutiny Committee:

- a) Considered the information contained in the Consultation Report.
- b) Endorsed the recommendation to Cabinet to proceed to Statutory Notice in relation to the proposal to create a new Primary School provision through the amalgamation of Llancaeath Junior School and Llanfabon Infants School.

9. 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES BAND B PROGRAMME - COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT: PLASYFELIN PRIMARY SCHOOL.

Councillor J. Pritchard declared an interest in Agenda Item No. 9 – 21st Century Schools and Colleges Band B Programme - Community Engagement Report: Plasyfelin Primary School, as Vice Chair of Governors at Plasyfelin Primary School. It was noted that Councillor J. Pritchard was in attendance to observe the meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Learning and Leisure introduced the report to update Scrutiny Members in relation to the 21st Century Schools Band B proposal in respect of a new replacement Plasyfelin Primary School in the grounds of the existing school site. It was noted that the proposal for Plasyfelin Primary School is exempt from the consultation processes outlined in the School Organisation Code 2018 and the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013. However, engagement with the school as well as the wider community was undertaken throughout the process in line with the Authority's Consultation and Engagement framework to enable transparent and open decision making. Members were advised that the 21st Century Schools Band B proposal for Plasyfelin Primary School went to formal consultation between the 20th October 2021 and the 1st December 2021. Reference was made to the Community Engagement Report attached as Appendix 1 to the report, which summarised each of the issues raised by the consultees.

The 21st Century Schools Manager delivered a summary presentation on the Community Engagement Report.

One Member sought assurances that the health and safety of pupils would be maintained during any building and demolition work. The 21st Century Schools Manager assured Members that the health and safety of pupils and staff would be paramount during work at the site. Members were advised that the proposal will be subject to a planning application process, led by an experienced Building Consultancy Team. In response to a Member's query the 21st Century Schools Manager advised the Scrutiny Committee that the site allowed for building work to be fenced off without causing any disruption to pupils.

Following consideration of the report it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that prior to a report being presented to Cabinet, the Education Scrutiny Committee:

- a) Considered the information contained in the Community Engagement Report.
- b) Endorsed the recommendation to Cabinet to proceed to Planning Application Stage.
- c) Endorsed the recommendation to proceed to Full Business Case.

10. 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES BAND B PROGRAMME - COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT: CENTRE FOR VULNERABLE LEARNERS (PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT).

The Cabinet Member for Learning and Leisure introduced the report to update Scrutiny Members in relation to the 21st Century Schools Band B proposal in respect of the establishment of a new Centre for Vulnerable Learners (Pupil Referral Unit). It was noted that Pupil Referral Units are exempt from the consultation processes outlined in the School Organisation Code 2018 and the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013. However, engagement with the school as well as the wider community was undertaken

throughout the process in line with the Authority's Consultation and Engagement framework to enable transparent and open decision making. Members were advised that the 21st Century Schools Band B proposal for the establishment of a new Centre for Vulnerable Learners (Pupil Referral Unit) in Pontllanfraith went to formal consultation between the 20th October 2021 and the 1st December 2021. Reference was made to the Community Engagement Report attached as Appendix 1 to the report, which summarised each of the issues raised by the consultees.

The 21st Century School Manager delivered a summary presentation on the Community Engagement Report.

A concern was raised in relation to the number of learners that have been sent out of county and it was questioned whether the proposal would address this issue. The Lead for Inclusion and ALN advised the Scrutiny Committee that some children with complex needs would still require residential provision, however the establishment of a Centre for Vulnerable Learners (Pupil Referral Unit) would meet the needs of children in the Caerphilly borough. The Officer also explained that some procured provision may still be used. In response to a Member's question regarding the number of pupils at the Glan-y-Nant Learning Centre, it was confirmed that there would be approximately 42 pupils.

Following consideration of the report it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that prior to a report being presented to Cabinet, the Education Scrutiny Committee:

- a) Considered the information contained in the Community Engagement Report.
- b) Endorsed the recommendation to Cabinet to proceed to Planning Application Stage.
- c) Endorsed the recommendation to proceed to Full Business Case.

The Cabinet Member for Learning and Leisure placed on record his thanks to the Education Scrutiny Committee for supporting the proposals and also to the 21st Century Schools Team for all their work in relation to the proposals and the consultation process.

10. SELF EVALUATION

The Cabinet Member for Learning and Leisure introduced the report to update Members on the self-evaluation process and its impact on strategic planning and to also raise awareness of the contribution of self-evaluation towards the implementation of a revised education strategy. The Strategic Lead for School Improvement provided the Scrutiny Committee with more detail on the report and outlined the range of self-evaluation activities that take place across the Education Directorate.

A Member referred to the range of emerging priorities for 2021-22 identified via the Service Improvement Plan and raised a query in relation to the more able and talented pupils. In response, the Strategic Lead for School Improvement confirmed that monitoring and evaluation reports are received for the more able and talented pupils and it is an area that would be included in the Plan. Members were advised that a meeting will be held with the More Able and Talented Co-ordinator and the Seren Project to identify milestones.

Following consideration of the item, the Education Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of the report.

The meeting closed at 7.05 pm.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 15th February 2022 they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR