



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD
MYNACH
ON THURSDAY, 19TH APRIL 2018 AT 5.30PM.**

PRESENT:

Councillor W. David - Chair
Councillor G. Oliver - Vice-Chair

Councillors:

C. Andrews, J. Bevan, P.J. Bevan, A. Collis, S. Cook, A. Farina-Childs, D.T. Hardacre, D. Havard, Mrs B. Miles, Mrs T. Parry, J. Roberts and R. Whiting

Together with:

K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), S. Richards (Head of Strategy Service – Education, Planning and Strategy), A. West (21st Century Schools, Admissions and Exclusions Manager), C. Evans (Interim Scrutiny Officer) and E. Sullivan (Senior Committee Services Officer).

Also Present:

Councillor P. Marsden (Cabinet Member for Education and Achievement)

Co-opted Members: Mr M. Barry (Parent Governor Representative), Mr R. Morgan and Mr M. Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education Representative).

CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENT

Councillor W. David on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee congratulated Mrs S. Richards on her appointment as Head of Education Planning and Strategy and wished her every future success.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M.P. James and R. Saralis and from Mr D. Davies (Caerphilly Governors Association) and Mrs P.J. Ireland (NUT).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Advice was sought in relation to Councillors who are also School Governors and whether there was a need to declare such an interest. Members were advised that as the report under consideration presented overarching and county wide in principle proposals there was no

requirement to declare an interest at this time. However this could be revisited in terms of appropriate dispensations when finalised projects came forward for consideration if necessary.

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

3. 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION BAND B PROPOSALS

Mrs S. Richards introduced the report which outlined the various projects for consideration under the 21st Century Schools Band B proposals and summarised the deliberations and recommendations of the Cross Party Working Group established to discuss the proposals.

It was noted that all the projects would be subject to funding being confirmed, individual business cases and formal consultation. Members were advised that the Cross Party Working Group had unanimously endorsed each of the projects which would also be subject to a needs assessment of current child provision within the area and a design, scoping and surveying exercise of the school sites.

Members were referred to section 7 of the report and the financial implications were explained. The Officer confirmed that Welsh Government (WG) had approved a maximum funding envelope of £78M of capital funding, of which 50% would be met by the Council and £32M of revenue funding via the MIM model. The way in which WG calculated funding for the individual projects was explained and would be determined by using an agreed rate per square meter/pupil at the 2019 predicted costs. This ensures that funding is applied consistently across Wales.

The Chair thanked Mrs Richards for her report and confirmed that each of the projects would be considered and voted upon individually. The Cabinet Member for Education and Achievement was invited to make a short statement.

Councillor Marsden confirmed that she had been fortunate enough to be present at the launch of the Idris Davies 3-18 School in Rhymney that morning which had been part of the Band A 21st Century School proposals. Seeing this commendable piece of work come to fruition only brought home the need to bring this standard of provision across the borough and the Band B proposal before Members would help achieve this equity of provision.

Project 1 - £4,884,700

This project encompassed 2 parts firstly the proposal to build a new school to replace the existing Upper Rhymney Primary School and relocation of Brynawel Primary pupils to the new school or to the Idris Davies 3-18 School. This project would then allow the relocation of Ysgol y Lawnt to the vacant Brynawel School site.

It was noted that there were significant surplus places at Brynawel and the Ysgol y Lawnt site as a listed building had numerous challenges in terms of existing and future uses. The Officer reassured Members that the proposal would be subject to consultation with all relevant stakeholders and review of catchment area.

In terms of the 3 possible sites for the school, Members sought clarification in relation to safe routes to schools and were advised that this would be looked at as part of the new project review process. Possible future uses for the Ysgol y Lawnt site were then queried and the Officer confirmed that this would be a matter for the Property Management Team who would look at options for future use.

Having fully considered Project 1 it was moved and seconded that it be recommended to Cabinet for approval and by show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED that Cabinet approve the principle of Project 1 as detailed in section 4.11.1 of the Officer's report.

Project 2 - £13,660,965 – Part 1 and Part 2

This project encompassed two parts the relocation of Tynywern Primary School to the Bedwas High Schools site and the refurbishment of the existing Tynywern site to create a new Welsh Medium Primary School (Part 1) and a new build school to replace the existing Ysgol Cwm Gwyddon on the ex Cwmcarn High School site following its closure (Part 2). Mrs Richards confirmed that this project aligned with the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan by creating additional Welsh Medium provision in those areas with identified need.

It would also see a reduction in surplus places in secondary provision and make estimated savings of £654,000 on backlog maintenance costs. It was noted that the proposal would be subject to a catchment area review of Welsh Medium provision within the Caerphilly basin.

A Member expressed concern with regard to the loss of the football pitch and grounds on the Bedwas High School site and was advised that although the exact location of the new build was yet to be determined the level of sporting facilities at the school would be maintained.

Members also queried whether the £13,660,965 would be sufficient to completely fund the project and were advised that the funding is now determined by WG based on BB98/99 to ensure consistency across Wales. The only additional funding may apply to any abnormal costs which would need to be evidenced at Business Case stage. However to reassure members Mrs Richards confirmed that Caerphilly has a proven track record of bringing in projects on time and in budget.

Clarification was sought in relation to the demand within the Bedwas area with regard to Welsh Medium provision and the validity of projected levels, the Member felt that this had not been proven and did not reflect the views voiced locally. Mrs Richards referred the member to the Welsh In Education Strategic Plan and reiterated that all projects would be subject to an extensive consultation process with all relevant stakeholders.

Following consideration of the Project 2 it was moved and seconded that it be recommended to Cabinet for approval and by show of hands and in noting there was 1 against it was agreed by the majority present.

RECOMMENDED that Cabinet approve the principle of Project 2 as detailed in section 4.11.2 of the Officer's report.

Project 3 – 11,021,525

This project proposed a new build school to replace the existing Plasyfelin School on the current site and the expansion of St James Primary School. The proposals would increase the number of school places within the Caerphilly Basin to meet future projected demand, remove a category C school in relation to condition and suitability and make an estimated saving of £705K on backlog maintenance costs. It would also see increased opportunities for community use and on-site childcare provision.

A Member raised a query in relation to the impact on the proposed development on the only Faith School in the area and if an assessment had been carried out in this regard. Mrs Richards confirmed that as these were in principle proposals no impact assessment had been undertaken as yet. The Member emphasised that faith provision was not limited just to the Catholic Church. The officer agreed and confirmed that the Church in Wales had recently asked to meet to discuss provision within the area. The member also asked if the question of faith provision could be included in any consultation in order to highlight and establish the level of demand. The officer advised that this is already undertaken as part of the live birth data analysis consultation. Although the current data confirms there are sufficient places to

meet demand if there was an evidenced increase in demand for faith provision this could be addressed within the band C proposals

Following consideration of Project 3 – the replacement of the Plasyfelin School it was moved and seconded that subject to the inclusion of the aforementioned consultation it be recommended to Cabinet for approval and by show of hands and in noting there was one against this was agreed by the majority present.

In relation to the expansion of the St James Primary School it was moved and seconded that it be recommended to Cabinet for approval however should the expected planning application not come to fruition this project should not be progressed and by show of hands and in noting there was 1 against it was agreed by the majority present.

RECOMMENDED that dependent on the outcome of future planning proposals Cabinet approve the principle of Project 3 as detailed in section 4.11.3 of the Officer's report.

Project 4 - £5,000,000

This project proposed the expansion of Trinity Fields Special School and Resource Base to accommodate future demand and the requirements of Additional Learning Needs Reform Bill. Mrs Keri Cole advised Members that this development would allow the Authority to meet demand within county bringing children with complex needs back to the locality and reduce the rising costs of sourcing out of County provision. Members were advised that there were restrictions within the site and a feasibility study would need to be undertaken.

Following consideration of Project 4 it was moved and seconded that it be recommended to Cabinet for approval and by show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED that Cabinet approve the principle for Project 4 as detailed in section 4.11.4 of the Officer's report.

Project 5 - £1,000,000

This project proposed the principle of establishing a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) to cater for the increased demand for in house Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) provision. This would allow the Council to meet its currently identified and projected future demand for EOTAS. Mrs Richards confirmed that there were more and more very vulnerable children with complex and challenging behaviours within our education system who needed proactive and specialist provision to support them back into mainstream education. Mrs Cole referenced the facilities at Glan y Nant as a centre of excellence and would look to see this high quality provision replicated.

Members noted the budget allocated to this project and queried if this would be sufficient. The Officer explained that this would in principle be a refurbishment rather than a new build project and Members should keep in mind that this provision would not be for the duration of the pupils' education but a way back into mainstream providing flexible support that could expand and contract depending on the level of need.

Clarification was sought in regard to any proposed sites and Officers confirmed that none had been identified at this very early stage. With this in mind Members requested that when a site was considered that it should include sufficient outside space to allow recreation and play areas.

Following consideration of Project 5 it was moved and seconded that it be recommended to Cabinet for approval and by show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED that Cabinet approve the principle of Project 5 as detailed in section 4.11.5 of the Officer's report.

Project 6 - £33,000,000

This project proposed a £32M refurbishment of Secondary Schools and a £10M refurbishment of Primary Schools, the extent of the works to be determined by using the 2018/19 condition surveys in conjunction with projected future need as a result of forthcoming planning applications. The refurbishment could include internal works such as laboratory refurbishments, roofs, window replacement and catering facilities along with improvements to sporting facilities. It was noted that Head Teachers were extremely supportive of this programme.

Clarification was sought in relation to future building projects and education provision and the formula used to calculate projected use based on housing development was explained. Mrs Andrea West confirmed that Welsh and Faith demand was taken into account in this calculation and agreed to circulate it to Members following the meeting.

Following consideration of Project 6 it was moved and seconded that it be recommended to Cabinet for approval and by show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED that Cabinet approve the principle of Project 6 as detailed in section 4.11.6 of the Officer's report.

Project 7 - £5,893,390

This project proposed the amalgamation of Park and Gilfach Primary Schools into a new build and the refurbished of Park Primary School to accommodate the relocation of Ysgol Gymraeg Gilfach Fargoed.

Following consideration of Project 7 it was moved and seconded that it be recommended to Cabinet for approval and by show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED that Cabinet approve the principle of Project 7 as detailed in section 4.11.7 of the Officers report.

Project 8 - £4,000,000

This project proposed the amalgamation of Llanfabon Infant School and Llancaeath Junior School and the expansion and refurbishment of Llanfabon Infants School to accommodate the new Primary School.

Members expressed concern with relation to the site size and whether it would be large enough to accommodate both schools and outdoor space. The Officer confirmed that there were challenges with the site however initial site investigation have confirmed that there is adequate space to accommodate the extension and create the required outdoor play and parking areas

Reference was made to future uses of the Llancaeath School site as this would be a concern for the local community and should be taken into account during any future consultation exercise. Members were advised that a consultation exercise on the amalgamation would be undertaken with all relevant stakeholders as outlined in the School Organisation Code 2013. Possible future uses for the LLancaeath site would be a matter for the Property Management Team who would look at options for future use.

Following consideration of Project 8 it was moved and seconded that it be recommended to Cabinet for approval and by show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED that Cabinet approve the principle of Project 8 as detailed in section 4.11.8 of the Officers report.

Project 9 – Secondary Municipal Investment Model (MIM) - £28,000,000 - £32,000,000

Mrs Richards advised the Committee that the size and nature of this project would be determined by a comprehensive review and consultation exercise in relation to sixth form education, single sex provision and surplus places in Caerphilly West.

Members acknowledged the need to address the aforementioned areas and were aware of the complications surrounding the project and requested that a further report on the MIM be brought back to this scrutiny committee before progression to the consultation phase.

A Member requested that the broadening of Faith provision also be included when reviewing 6th Form provision within Secondary Schools and Officer's agreed that this would include English, Welsh and Faith Education.

Following consideration of Project 9 it was moved and seconded that it be recommended to Cabinet for approval and by show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED that Cabinet approve the principle of Project 9 as detailed in section 4.11.9 of the Officer's report.

Having considered each of the projects the Chair referred Members to the recommendations contained in section 10.1 and 10.2 of the Officers report. It was moved and seconded that the recommendations therein be approved and by show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED that: -

- (i) comments and recommendations of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee be report to Cabinet as part of the consultation process;
- (ii) Cabinet approve in principle agreement that the Council will deliver the Band B 21st Century Schools Programme, subject to funding being confirmed for individual projects, business cases being approved by Welsh Government and the outcome of individual consultations.

The meeting closed at 19.12pm

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd May 2018 they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR