

**DROP-IN SESSIONS FOR PUPILS, STAFF AND PARENTS/CARERS HELD AT RHYMNEY COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL 27<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2014**

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Councillor Rhianon Passmore – Cabinet Member for Education & Lifelong Learning

Bleddyn Hopkins – Assistant Director, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools

Keri Cole – Manager, Learning, Education and Inclusion

Julian Harding – Lead Designer, Building Consultancy

Julian Williams – Senior Officer, School Admissions & Exclusions

**The first group to attend the Drop-In session were representatives of the Rhymney Comprehensive School Council.**

Statement. This proposal has no benefit for Rhymney Comprehensive School, in fact with the primary pupils sharing our facilities we will be worse off.

A. Preliminary discussions have taken place with Rhymney Comprehensive School and the proposal to have a new primary school on the same site does not seem to have any detrimental effect on the Comprehensive school's ability to deliver the curriculum.

Statement. When we are undertaking controlled experiments in a laboratory I think it will be very off putting to have 30 noisy primary aged children watching what we are doing.

A. There will be close consultation between the Primary and Secondary schools regarding any visits. Any controlled experiments may be watched by children under the supervision of adult staff.

Statement. I do not think it will be safe to have a 3 year old wandering around a Secondary school.

A. As stated previously, any primary aged child that is on the Secondary school site will be closely supervised by staff.

Statement. Rhymney Comprehensive School has 7 feeder primary schools. If Abertysswg and Pontlottyn merge then transition for them will be easier whereas the 5 remaining feeder schools will find transition harder. You should build a new primary school for all feeder schools, a super school.

A. It would be nice to have a new primary school for all feeder schools but that would not be practical as the new school would have 1100 pupils and would be larger than the Secondary School. Initially we did look at the possibility of including Fochriw Primary School in the proposal but following a survey of residents we decided to exclude Fochriw because of the negative response of the residents for reasons such as transport in adverse weather conditions or when a child is ill and needs to be collected, transport of young children and the effect on/loss of community values. Transition works well currently and this proposal would improve matters and not have a detrimental effect on it.

Q. Will the primary and secondary schools have the same pick up points?

A. The potential site plan on page 17 of the consultation document was referred to and the pupils were shown the proposed separate primary and secondary pick up and drop off points.

Q. Will the catchment areas of Phillipstown Primary and Whiterose Primary schools still be changing?

A. It has never been our intention to change the catchment area of any of the Rhymney Comprehensive feeder Primary schools catchment areas. The only change proposed would be that the catchment areas of Abertysswg and Pontlottyn Primary Schools would be amalgamated into one catchment area that would feed the new Primary school.

Q. How will the construction of the new Primary School affect the Secondary School?

A. We have built a number of new schools recently on the same site as schools in use, such as Cwm Ifor Primary and Greenhill Primary. Another example was the recent extension to Rhymney Comprehensive. The construction site would be fenced off and the construction traffic would be regulated during school times.

Q. With heavy machinery on site it is inevitable that teenagers will try and gain access to them. What measures will be put in place to stop this?

A. The building contractor would make suitable safety and security arrangements.

Statement. The primary children will be able to view what the secondary children are doing. The secondary children tend to smoke down by the tennis courts and that is one of the nearest points to the construction site.

A. The construction workers in close proximity would likely be a deterrent to pupils smoking in that area. The smoking will be noted for the attention of the Headteacher.

Q. How will the construction site affect the local Community?

A. There should be an opportunity to employ local people on the construction. Contractors would also have to adhere to Building related regulations such as noise levels and start and finish times.

Q. What will happen to the old school buildings?

A. As both Primary schools are owned by the Council, it is for the Council to determine future use. Concerns have been expressed regarding the potential future use of the Abertysswg School site. The Council has committed to a planning development brief for the site which would provide the local community with the opportunity to propose future use options.

**The representatives of the School Council left the session.**

**Queries raised by other pupils and staff that were not covered above :**

Q. Page 7 of the Consultation document states that 85.6% were against the proposal so why are you proceeding with it?

A. Page 7 refers to the consultation that took place with residents of Fochriw to see if they should be included in the proposal. As you say 85.6% were against Fochriw being included for a variety of reasons but mainly to do with transportation, so the Council decided to exclude Fochriw from the proposal.

Q. The possible site plan on page 17 of the consultation document refers to a site entrance for vehicles to the lower car park. I don't think the bend is large enough for a bus to get round and there is not much scope for road improvements?

A. The proposed safe route is not on the lower car park area but a new area close to the existing footbridge.

Statement. This proposal will cause traffic congestion. There is no traffic congestion in neither Abertysswg or Pontlottyn at present.

A. There is congestion experienced at most school sites, in particular at the start and finish of the school day.

Q. The Possible Site Plan on page 17 of the Consultation document shows an ecology area. What will this consist of?

A. We haven't gone into fine detail as yet. We will consult with school representatives as to ideas.

Q. Will any vehicles need access to the Primary site through the Secondary School gate?

A. There would be access envisaged for delivery vehicles, emergency vehicles and disabled drivers/vehicles.

**The Drop-In session for pupils and staff closed at 2.00p.m.**

At the Drop-In session for parents/carers held between 2.00p.m. and 5.00p.m. 1 person turned up, who was unable to attend the public/community meeting and was in favour of the proposal.

**The Drop-In session for parents/carers closed at 5.00p.m.**

**Governing Body meeting at Rhymney Comprehensive School**  
**27<sup>th</sup> November 2014**

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Councillor Rhianon Passmore – Cabinet Member for Education & Lifelong Learning  
Bleddyn Hopkins – Assistant Director, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools  
Keri Cole – Manager, Learning, Education and Inclusion  
Sue Richards – Principal Finance Officer  
Andrea West – Senior School Admissions and Exclusions Officer

Concerns: Abertysswg car park at the end of Westville has uneven land. How are people going to get in and out in bad weather?

A. Site visits have taken place to consider as part of the safe route to schools proposal.

Q. In the adverse weather are the paths going to be cleared as this will affect attendance. The parents will be unable to walk the route in the snow and it will not be accessible to pushchairs etc.

A. There are options for schools to purchase snow clearing services during periods of adverse weather should the governing body wish.

Q. At present there is a winter maintenance plan which only applies to the bus routes. It is a long way to go to clear paths. The Council do not clear side roads etc.

A. As stated above, options do exist to purchase snow clearing services.

Q. What access will there be to the turning and parking points?

A. There is a larger scale map available (tabled). Access is by the viaduct down to the present footbridge. There are separate Primary and Secondary aged drop off areas and parking proposed.

Q. What about congestion?

A. There have been discussions and a site visit with Highways Officers to discuss this as an access route and this will likely need some form of traffic control.

Q. I assume from the plans of the school that teachers etc would be encouraged to use the offsite parking.

A. Yes. It is proposed to have restricted vehicle access to the site e.g. emergency vehicles, delivery vehicles and disabled drivers/vehicles. It is proposed to have offsite parking for Primary school staff and parents. This is still work in progress and there will need to be further consultation regarding the detail.

Q. Will off site parking include the Comprehensive school ?

A. There will be facilities for parents (and staff if they wish) but no changes are proposed to existing Secondary staff parking.

Q. Are we going to have 2 separate schools? Why the change from the original consultation.

A. There are various options to consider eg single campus, federation etc. The option we have consulted upon is a status quo situation of one Primary and one Secondary. Cabinet has agreed to consider federation arrangements for Fochriw

Primary. If and when a Primary school governing body is established, we can consider different options.

Q. Will there be one Headteacher for all of this? It was mentioned in the Heads interview for this school.

A. We have not stated that in the consultation document but it is one of the considerations for the future, as outlined above.

Statement. There has been no commitment to a single headteacher but that remains an option, subject to consultation with the respective governing bodies.

Q. The perception across Caerphilly is this is going to be a single 3 – 18 school.

A. There are different options but the consultation document outlines the present proposal.

Q. Why did Human Resources put out this advertisement when the Headteacher was appointed ? It states that the person appointed would eventually be in charge of a 3 -18 school. Can you check with them?

A. We will explore this. We would have to follow a process to explore different options, including consultation with the respective governing bodies. There are new Welsh Government regulations in terms of governance which we would have regard to. These regulations would be followed in respect of the Fochriw federation proposal, for example.

Q. If Abertysswg and Pontllytyn Primaries come, how do you then pursue a single headteacher 3 -18 proposal. There is nothing positive for our school in this document.

A. The process would be as outlined previously. The benefits for the Primary school children have been outlined and after all they will be your (secondary school) future children.

Statement. I am very surprised at what has come out in this document.

A. You have made your position clear.

Statement. The way it was first packaged was as a 3 – 18 school. It was in Newline and that is what the community expects. There now appears to have been a miscommunication. This is bad publicity.

A. It could still be a single 3 – 18 school eventually. This would need to be considered by the respective governing bodies.

Q. What about the layout? There will be 2 separate schools. How are we going to manage the separation?

A. We would anticipate that the schools will work together to establish this. There needs to be discussion between the two Governing Bodies to resolve this.

Q. How do you envisage that we share facilities?

A. This would need to be discussed by the respective governing bodies and senior school staff.

Q. Would funding be available to plan etc?

A. What we are talking about tonight is about the principles and not a detailed plan. There is no specific funding outlined for this purpose as the funding secured is of a capital nature.

Q. The concerns expressed now need to be given consideration.

A. This needs to be managed for the best of all learners.

Statement. The difference is the consultation is either a single 3 -18 school or separate Primary and Secondary schools.

A. The consultation document is clear and is a statement of our present position.

Q. What will happen next?

A. The formal consultation period commenced on the 17<sup>th</sup> November and ends 31<sup>st</sup> December. A series of formal meetings are outlined in the consultation document. All views and comments will be summarised and presented to Cabinet in early February 2015 for them to decide whether to proceed with publishing a Statutory Notice. If this proceeds, it is envisaged for around March 2015 with a final decision likely around June 2015. If the proposal gets agreed then, the building should start in the Autumn term 2015 with a planned school opening date of January 2017.

A. As soon as the Governing Body of the new school is established, we can discuss issues of management e.g. 3 -18 arrangements, working as a shared site.

Q. What does call in mean?

A. If, for example, the Welsh Government believe the process may have been flawed and can decide against the proposal or ask the Authority to reconsider.

Statement. The Governing Body of the new school can have a meaningful dialogue and can consider options. They will need to have regard to the recently produced governance regulations.

Statement. The fundamental management of the new school appears to have been left until the last minute. They need to engage before.

Statement. Surely this is the Authority's gift to guide the future of the new school.

A. There will be a temporary Governing Body in place until permanent arrangements are in place.

Statement. We would speak to school staff, the wider community and Governing Body around the design of the new school. We have statutory process to conclude. The successful conclusion of the Statutory Notice would give us the opportunity to proceed with the school design, safe routes to schools and anything else involved. The planning application would need to be drawn up and build go out to tender.

Statement. You have 2 issues – physical build and the more challenging point of which option. There needs to be a more informed approach. Can you look at existing 3 -18 schools etc.

Statement. You have set expectations with this document which is 2 separate schools. The temporary Governing Body would need to be involved in everything.

A. We have clearly outlined our present position in the consultation document. We can then look at other options at a future date if that is the wish of the respective governing bodies. This would involve due process, similar to any other significant changes e.g. removal of 6<sup>th</sup> forms.

Statement. The first job would be to appoint a new Headteacher in the new school.

A. The first job would likely be to decide a structure for the new arrangements.

Q. Can you point me towards good examples of both processes so that I can give them both due consideration ?

Statement. Propose a working group be set up to look at this. It should involve Headteacher and there needs to be more fact finding. You need to involve stakeholders with agreed actions for everyone.

Q. Moving forward, if this consultation is adopted what will happen to the current school sites. We are a close community. The schools are at present the heart of both communities.

A. There has been a lot of discussion around this so that we do not end up with derelict buildings. We would usually declare them surplus to Education requirements. In relation to Abertysswg Primary, the Council has committed to consult the community via a planning development brief.

Q. Can the plaques in the current schools be placed somewhere where they can be seen?

A. There will be due consideration of this as we have had past experience of this in other schools e.g. Lewis School Pengam memorial.

**Community Meeting at Rhymney Comprehensive School**  
**27<sup>th</sup> November 2014**

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Councillor Rhianon Passmore – Cabinet Member for Education & Lifelong Learning  
Bleddyn Hopkins – Assistant Director, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools  
Keri Cole – Manager, Learning, Education and Inclusion  
Sue Richards – Principal Finance Officer  
Andrea West – Senior School Admissions and Exclusions Officer

A total of 3 local residents, plus a relative of one of the residents, attended the meeting.

There was an introduction given by Cllr Passmore regarding the proposal. Mr Hopkins further outlined the proposal and anticipated timescales, including the formal consultation period of 17<sup>th</sup> November to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014.

Cllr Passmore stated that this is an excellent opportunity to improve the learning environment. If people have concerns or worries this is the opportunity to bring them forward for discussion.

Q. From the schools point of view I hope the school turns out well. However I have concerns regarding the vehicle access for two cars at the end of my family's land. Will it affect my access to my property? Is there a road to the car park? Will the access route come under the viaduct ?

A. Yes the proposed access will be under the viaduct. Planning and Highways will need to give the matter further consideration.

Q. How do we control the volume of school transport and public traffic?

Statement. I live next door to the current school and it is a problem and I have lived with it for many years.

Statement. The area needs to be gated off.

A. We will review the safe route arrangements with Highways to ensure e.g. traffic control, if deemed necessary.

Q. Will there be double parking under the viaduct?

A. There is insufficient width for 2 lanes of traffic simultaneously, plus pedestrian access. There is a provisional area for Secondary drop off and parking with separate areas for the Primary and then over a new footbridge. There is proposed for Primary site access for emergency, delivery and disabled drivers/vehicles.

Q. What is going to happen to Pontlottyn School?

A. This would be determined by Council in the event that Education declared the site surplus to our requirements.

Statement. Pavements will narrow the road.

A. There needs to be some sort of traffic control in place.

Q. Will it affect the value of my house? I have recently had it valued. I am concerned that if the school is open until 8pm at night for sporting facilities it could increase the anti-social behaviour around my home.



Statement. Residents currently have access to the parking lot at Pontlottyn Primary and there is an easement in place. Will this be removed? The common boundary wall of Pontlottyn Primary School is shared with other properties. Maintenance of the wall would need to be part of the sale conditions.

A. Please can you complete the pro-forma contained within the consultation document outlining your concerns in order that we can note these and refer them to the specialist officers for their consideration.

Statement. These meetings do not appear to have been advertised well.

A. They were published in the Western Mail and the Caerphilly Observer has reported on it.

Statement. They could have been displayed in Council Offices and local display boards.

A. Details were distributed extensively to a range of consultees and advertised in newspapers.

Statement. We are not opposed to the new school but want to ensure that there is a safe route to the school.

Q. Is the existing footpath staying as this path is well used by the community and local dog walkers.

A. The path will remain if it is the one outside the present school grounds.

Statement. I have horses there so you will need to ensure that secure fencing is in place prior to the work starting to make sure they do not escape.

A. Noted.

Those in attendance were reminded that the pro-forma contained with the consultation document needs to be returned by the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014.

All attendees asked for a copy of these notes to be forwarded to them.