



SPECIAL CABINET – 25TH MARCH 2015

SUBJECT: ABERTYSSWG/PONTLOTTYN PRIMARY: OUTCOME OF THE FORMAL CONSULTATION PROCESS

REPORT BY: ACTING DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on the formal consultation process and to determine whether to proceed to Statutory Notice in respect of the above proposal.

2. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 2.1 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.

3. THE REPORT

- 3.1 Cabinet, at its meeting on 29 October 2014, agreed to proceed to a formal consultation process in relation to the above proposal.

- 3.2 A formal consultation process (accompanied by a consultation document) took place between 17 November and 31 December 2014. During this period a series of meetings were also convened which are outlined below:

Thursday 27 November : Drop-in sessions for school pupils, staff, parents/carers, (Rhymney Comprehensive) governing body and public/community meetings.

Thursday 11 December : Drop-in sessions for school pupils, staff, parents/carers (Abertysswg Primary) and governing body meeting.

Monday 15 December : Drop-in sessions for school pupils, staff, parents/carers (Pontlottyn Primary) and governing body meeting.

- 3.3 Following a check of the consultation document, together with Welsh Government observations, an addendum sheet was produced and made available to all in attendance at the 3 days of meetings (see Appendix 1). A summary of main issues arising from the consultative process is outlined below and the accompanying notes of the meetings are attached.

Rhymney Comprehensive (Appendix 2)

- 3.4 Drop-in session (school council):
- Safety of Primary pupils/supervision
 - Construction work/site traffic arrangements
 - After use of existing school buildings.

- 3.5 Drop-in session (other pupils and staff):
- Safe route arrangements
 - Vehicle access.
- 3.6 Governing Body meeting:
- Safe route arrangements
 - Single site management/headteacher arrangements
 - After use of existing school buildings.
- 3.7 Community meeting:
- Safe route arrangements
 - After use of Pontlottyn Primary School building
 - Future property/site maintenance issues.

Abertysswg Primary (Appendix 3)

- 3.8 Drop-in session (staff):
- Future staffing arrangements/job security issues
 - Safe route arrangements
 - Loss of community facilities
 - After use of Abertysswg Primary School building
 - Design of new school
 - Capacity/admission arrangements for new school.
- 3.9 Drop-in session (school council):
- Future staffing arrangements
 - Facilities/arrangements at new school
 - Loss of community facilities/existing school.
- 3.10 Drop-in session (parents/carers):
- Safe route arrangements
 - Distance/attendance
 - Facilities at new school
 - After use of existing school building.
- 3.11 Governing Body meeting:
- Clarification of way forward
 - Educational standards/performance
 - Community links
 - Single site management/headteacher arrangements
 - Safe route arrangements
 - Vote against the proposal.

Pontlottyn Primary (Appendix 4)

- 3.12 Drop-in session (staff)
- Future staffing arrangements/job security issues
 - Design of new school
 - Facilities at new school.
- 3.13 Drop-in session (parents/carers):
- Safe route arrangements
 - Walking distance/transport.

- 3.14 Governing Body meeting:
- Standards/performance
 - Safe route arrangements
 - Supervision
 - Facilities at new school
 - Anti-social behaviour
 - Vote in favour of the proposal.

Other Responses (Appendix 5)

- 3.15 These responses are briefly summarised in the Appendix. There are 7 responses in favour of the proposal with 8 against and 1 unsure.
- 3.16 These responses are largely consistent with those outlined in the formal consultation meetings.
- 3.17 In conclusion, the main issues which have arisen during the formal consultation process may be summarised as:
- Acknowledgement that a new school would bring improvements to the teaching and learning environment.
 - That it would result in better and newer facilities and increased resources.
 - Recognition that the site layout proposals are the most optimal given the constraints in developing the school for the 2 communities of Pontllytyn and Abertysswg.

However, a number of concerns were expressed, mostly in relation to:

- Safe routes to schools/security.
- Increased distances to school and potential effects on attendance. School attendance is a responsibility of parents.
- Loss of community identity.

Two further issues were also raised on a number of occasions, namely:

- After use of existing school buildings.
- Single site management arrangements.

Both these matters were clarified in both the consultation document and in the formal meetings.

- 3.18 Copies of the meeting notes and responses are available in the Members' Resource Area for inspection

4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment screening has been completed in accordance with the Council's Strategic Equality Plan and some low level or minor impact as described below has been identified affecting one or more of the target equality groups.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The bid approval in 2011 amounted to £12m which incorporated Fochriw Primary plus community facilities at Fochriw. CCBC had earmarked its £6m match funding share (50%) for this project. Because Fochriw Primary has since been dropped from the proposals that element of expenditure, for the provision of replacement community facilities in Fochriw, is no longer appropriate. Moreover, the new replacement school will need to be smaller than was originally proposed as it excludes Fochriw pupils. For these reasons the original figure of £12 million is no longer relevant.

- 5.2 Following submission of the Strategic Outline Case (SOC) to the Welsh Government, a communication was received on 17 December 2014 which indicates that Welsh Government consider a total project sum of £6m build cost, plus a reasonable sum for additional costs to be appropriate for the project. The reasonable expectation, including the ancillary and abnormal works outlined below, is a final project cost of circa £8m.
- 5.3 It is evident that there will be unusually high additional costs to the project, which is planned to be built on the Rhymney Comprehensive School site, including:
- Land acquisitions (potentially both Pontlottyn and Abertysswg) to facilitate safe routes to school
 - Safe route provision
 - Playing field re-alignment
 - Flood alleviation works
- 5.4 Detailed work is still on-going to determine the best precise location for the new school building within the Upper Rhymney Valley Comprehensive site. This is in part to address some of the observations detailed in the consultation regarding the relationship between the primary and secondary school buildings, shared drop-off points and such like, and also to ensure that the overall cost is within the parameters set by Welsh Government as to total cost.

6. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 A very small number of staff may be affected by the proposal and will be dependant upon budget availability, staffing structures and staffing changes in the next 2 years.
- 6.2 Trade unions will be engaged in the process leading to the staffing of the new school.

7. CONSULTATIONS

- 7.1 Detailed consultations have taken place as referred to in the report and comments have been reflected in the report and/or the accompanying notes of meetings.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 Cabinet are asked to consider the outcome of the consultation process, including the updated financial information from the Welsh Government and to determine whether to proceed to Statutory Notice.

9. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 To decide whether to proceed with the publication of a Statutory Notice.

10. STATUTORY POWER

- 10.1 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.
- 10.2 This is a Cabinet function.

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Background Papers:
21st Century Schools files
Council report 23 November 2010 (SOP)
Council report 3 November 2011 (SOP2)
Cabinet report 29 October 2014
Welsh Government approval letter 5 December 2011

Appendices:
Appendix 1: Summary of other responses
Appendix 2: Notes of meetings at Rhymney Comprehensive School
Appendix 3: Notes of meetings at Abertysswg Primary School
Appendix 4: Notes of meetings at Pontlottyn Primary School
Appendix 5: Addendum to consultation document