

No.

LEARNING AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on 15th October, 2020.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor S.J. Griffiths (Chairman); Councillor Ms. R.M. Birch (Vice—Chairman); Councillors N.P. Hodges, T.H. Jarvie, G.C Kemp, Mrs.J.M. Norman, A.C. Parker, Mrs. S.D. Perkes, L.O. Rowlands and N.C. Thomas.

Co-opted Members: Dr. M. Price (Roman Catholic Church), Mrs. J. Lynch-Wilson (Parent Governor – Primary Sector) and Mr. I. Cramb (Vale Youth Forum)

Also present: Councillor L. Burnett (Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration) and Councillor S. Hanks

124 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Chairman read the following statement:

“May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing.”

125 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE –

This was received from Mr. H. Gapper (Welsh Medium Education).

126 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 17th September, 2020 be approved as a correct record.

127 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Councillors T.J. Jarvie and A.C. Parker declared an interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 4 – Update on the Proposal to Increase the Number of Primary School Places in Cowbridge to Meet Increased Demand as a Result of Recent and Proposed Housing Developments. The nature of their interests was that both Councillors were Local Authority appointed Governors for Cowbridge Comprehensive School. Both Councillors had received dispensation from the Standards Committee to speak and vote on such matters.

No.

128 UPDATE ON THE PROPOSAL TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES IN COWBRIDGE TO MEET THE INCREASED DEMAND AS A RESULT OF RECENT AND PROPOSED HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS (REF) -

Cabinet, on 9th March, 2020 had approved the Director of Learning and Skills' proposal to increase the number of primary school places in Cowbridge to meet the increased demand as a result of recent and proposed housing developments, and Cabinet had resolved that the report be referred to this Committee for consideration as part of the proposed consultation exercise.

The 21st Century Schools Project Manager presented the report which provided a summary of the responses to a previous consultation on a proposal to amalgamate Y Bont Faen Primary School and Cowbridge Comprehensive School which had been considered by the Committee during a meeting on 5th December, 2019.

The report also advised Committee of the new preferred way forward as identified by the Directorate and approved by Cabinet following the previous consultation, which proposed that the Local Authority meet the increased demand for English medium Primary education in Cowbridge from September 2022 by;

- Changing the age range of Cowbridge Comprehensive School from 11 - 19 to 3 - 19;
- Increasing the capacity of Cowbridge Comprehensive School from to 1,586 places to 1,796 places to accommodate 210 English medium primary school places with an additional 48 part-time nursery places; and
- Constructing a new school building on the Cowbridge Comprehensive School site to accommodate the primary and nursery places.

The Officer advised that the consultation period for the new proposal had launched on 16th March, 2020, and following the closure of all schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic on 23rd March it had been decided that the consultation should remain open and the end date removed in order that consultees could continue to submit feedback and the documentation continue to be accessed and reviewed during this period. The Officer advised that an end date of 18th October had initially been set for the consultation but upon being notified that not all consultees had been made aware of this it had been decided that the consultation period should be extended to 23rd November to ensure that all consultees were given sufficient time to respond.

The Officer gave an overview of the responses to the consultation thus far, noting that 113 responses had been received to date with 48% being in favour, 51% not supporting the proposal and 1% not indicating an opinion in favour or against. The Officer also gave a summary of the key themes identified in the responses which did not favour the proposal which were as follows:

- Opposition to the 'All-through' school model being proposed;
- Concerns regarding school capacity changes and the admissions process;
- Residents' concerns regarding the traffic implications of the proposal;

No.

- Opposition to a lack of investment in Y Bont Faen Primary School; and
- Issues with the consultation process being followed.

The Officer addressed each theme in turn and provided further information regarding consultees' concerns from the perspective of the Local Authority. At this time the Chairman drew Committee Members' attention to written representations submitted in response to this matter which had been circulated to Members ahead of the meeting and had been made available to view on the Council's website alongside the Agenda Item.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration, with permission to speak, wished to highlight that, in relation to the consultation on the previous proposal, Cabinet had taken on board the strong response regarding the suggested discontinuation of Y Bont Faen Primary School which was why the decision had been taken to develop a different proposal which would still meet the demand for Primary school places in Cowbridge, given this was the primary aim of the exercise. The Cabinet Member also noted that amongst those members of the public who had spoken during the Scrutiny Committee meeting when the previous proposal had been considered, there had been vocal support in favour of the 3-19 model proposed for Cowbridge Comprehensive School, and this had also informed the new proposal under consideration.

At this time the Chairman invited members of the public who had registered to speak to address the Committee. The registered speakers were; Rev. Heather Weddell, a Community Governor at Y Bont Faen Primary School; Councillor Dr. John Andrew, Cowbridge and Llanblethian Town Councillor; and Mr. Neil Millard, a parent of a pupil attending Y Bont Faen Primary School. The key points raised by the public speakers could be summarised as follows:

- The Cowbridge Comprehensive School site was not appropriate to accommodate Primary pupils due to problems with congestion and its facilities, whereas the established facility at Y Bont Faen could be extended and utilised for the good of the whole community.
- The cost of extending or renewing Y Bont Faen Primary School would be lesser than that of the proposal under consideration.
- There was no clear evidence as to the benefit of all-through schools for younger pupils. Nor did there appear to be as a democratic mandate for this model being the Council's preferred option for schooling.
- The proposal discriminated against residents of Clare Gardens and families without transport due to the distance of their homes from the Comprehensive site in comparison to Y Bont Faen, and the lack of a safe walking route to the site.
- It was unfair to pupils and parents that the proposal would see one Primary school in Cowbridge with brand new facilities and automatic progression to Cowbridge Comprehensive, and one in need of refurbishment and without automatic progression.
- The reasoning behind ruling out the Darren Farm site was unclear as it appeared discussions had not yet taken place with Taylor Wimpey regarding the early release of the site.

No.

- No plan had been put forward as yet regarding how the shortfalls and challenges faced by Y Bont Faen Primary School (and other schools in the Vale with backlog maintenance) were to be resolved, as was required by the 21st Century Schools programme.

There being no points of clarification for the public speakers raised by Committee Members, the Chairman thanked them for their time.

A Member referenced concerns raised regarding age groups mixing in a through school setting, and the 21st Century Schools Project Manager advised that it was proposed a similar approach to that of Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Morgannwg be taken, with the Primary phase of the school providing everything a standalone Primary would have in terms of facilities and safeguarding measures, along with access to more specialist facilities and teaching resources at the Secondary site for the Primary pupils. The Director of Learning and Skills added that the Head teacher of Bro Morgannwg had spoken favourably of the all-through model at the meeting when the previous proposal had been discussed, and the Senior Leadership Team at Cowbridge Comprehensive had submitted a written representation in support of the proposal and which outlined the opportunities available through adopting the proposed all-through model.

Committee Members expressed their views on the matter with some echoing the concerns of the public speakers that the proposal took opportunity away from pupils at Y Bont Faen Primary and was not an effective use of money when the existing Primary school site in Cowbridge could be improved and expanded upon instead. A Member also highlighted that the management team at Cowbridge Comprehensive would not have experience of managing the Primary phase.

Other Members spoke favourably of the proposal, noting that there was an acknowledged need to increase Primary school places in the area, but also a need to move forward as the Local Authority was already 12-18 months behind in meeting this need. It was also noted that all-through schools were successful and had good records in areas where the model had been implemented, and that as Cowbridge Comprehensive was an excellent school a Primary school would likely benefit from its expertise. The Co-opted Member representing the Vale Youth Forum highlighted that within the existing all-through model at Bro Morgannwg there were opportunities for Secondary pupils to gain work experience through attending the Nursery site, and for Primary pupils to familiarise themselves with the Secondary site prior to transition.

In response to further questions from Members, Officers advised of the following:

- The new Primary school was not being proposed specifically to accommodate pupils living in Clare Garden Village, as its catchment area would mirror that of Y Bont Faen thus affording parents the opportunity to express a preference between the schools should the distance to either site be an issue. Free home-to-school transport would be provided to any pupil living more than 2 miles' walking distance from their Primary school.

No.

- Concerns raised regarding available pavement space would be addressed should the proposal move forward, with a travel plan being drafted in order to develop safe routes to school and additional Section 106 contributions available to support active travel.
- While Y Bont Faen's current site wasn't necessarily too small to accommodate a 420 place school, it was a sloping site which would pose challenges to such a development. In addition, the impact on the local highway was of concern as the actions needed to comply with Planning requirements would add significantly to the project's costs, and limited access to the site would pose issues in terms of procuring a contractor due to potentially high risks and attached financial implications. The only feasible option for development on the existing site would be to demolish the current building and re-build, which would incur significant costs due to the need to relocate pupils and staff while this was ongoing.
- Addressing the condition of existing school buildings (such as Y Bont Faen) was to be considered as a priority under the Asset Renewal Programme, however the programme had to take into consideration all schools in the Vale and was subject to the approval of Full Council as part of the Capital Programme. The backlog maintenance required at Y Bont Faen would therefore be considered over coming months, and had already been subject to investment by the Local Authority.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration, with permission to speak, wished to echo Officers' points regarding the Asset Renewal Programme and highlighted that while Y Bont Faen had recently received a sizeable amount of money under the scheme there was no reason why it wouldn't still be included and considered going forward. The Cabinet Member added that it had been made clear that there was an intention for a new school to be provided for Y Bont Faen and this was still the case, but as the purpose of the proposal currently under discussion was to increase the number of Primary school places in Cowbridge, and as it had been voiced strongly during the previous consultation exercise that Y Bont Faen wished to retain its current location and size, development of a new building for the school was not being considered as part of this specific proposal.

There being no further queries or comments from Members it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the Scrutiny Committee endorse the resolutions as contained in the reference from Cabinet dated 9th March (Minute No. C265).

Reason for recommendation

To ensure that the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee is consulted on the proposal as part of the proposed consultation exercise.

No.

129 WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2019-20 (REF) -

Cabinet, on 7th September, 2020 had approved in principle the Council's Annual Welsh Monitoring Report and Promotional Strategy, subject to consideration by this Committee.

The Head of Policy and Business Transformation presented the report, which brought to the attention of the Committee the Council's progress against the Welsh Language Standards (Welsh Language Standards Monitoring Report, Appendix 1) and against the Promotional Strategy for the Vale of Glamorgan (Appendix 2) for 2019/20.

The Monitoring Report and Promotional Strategy Updates summarised the main areas where progress had been made and provided annual updates as required by the Welsh Language Commissioner.

Having considered the report it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED - T H A T the Scrutiny Committee endorse the resolutions as contained in the reference from Cabinet dated 9th March (Minute No. C323).

Reason for recommendation

To allow the Council to meet its reporting duty to the Welsh Commissioner as part of the Welsh Language Standards.

130 CORONAVIRUS RECOVERY STRATEGY (REF) -

Cabinet, on 21st September, 2020, endorsed the Coronavirus Recovery Strategy and resolved that it should be referred to all Scrutiny Committees in order that they be provided with an overview of the work undertaken in response, transition and recovery from the Coronavirus pandemic and to allow the identification of any particular area(s) of focus for scrutiny activity.

The Head of Policy and Business Transformation introduced the report and drew Members' attention to two pieces of work in particular that were contained therein: a Community Impact Assessment which highlighted the effect of the Pandemic across the Vale of Glamorgan on a micro level, for instance its impact on Black and Minority Ethnic communities and the elderly; and an Economic Impact Assessment which noted that unemployment figures had doubled in the previous seven months and there had been a significant rise in Universal Credit claimants. The Officer also highlighted specific Recovery Strategy Priorities which were particularly relevant to the work of the Committee.

The Director of Learning and Skills continued the presentation of the report by elaborating on some of the key issues facing the Directorate in terms of recovery, for

No.

instance ensuring equitable access for all pupils to learning resources, addressing the professional learning needs of staff and assisting schools in developing blended learning plans to accommodate pupils who were isolating at home. The Co-opted Member representing the Vale Youth Forum highlighted that his own experience of blended learning following a period of isolation had been excellent, and he praised the efforts being made by schools in this area.

The Director referred to the significant number of pupils (approximately 250) who had remained at home when schools had re-opened in September largely due to anxiety amongst parents regarding conditions at school, and the work that was therefore being carried out with schools and parents to ensure these pupils remained engaged with their studies. The Director also highlighted that a significant amount of work was being undertaken to prevent young people from not being in education, employment or training.

The Director concluded her presentation by advising Committee of the 'business as usual' matters which were being addressed in addition to the COVID recovery work within the Directorate, such as the introduction of the Curriculum for Wales and work around the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Act.

In response to questions from Members, Officers advised of the following:

- Regarding monitoring the appropriateness of the Elective Home Education (EHE) officers were supporting children and families who were now EHE. Officers and schools were doing everything possible to support pupils, who had not returned to their schools, with schools in particular being pro-active and still providing online learning for these pupils, whereas the same provision was not being offered in every Local Authority.
- In terms of a 'circuit-breaker' lockdown which was anticipated to be announced by Welsh Government the following week, it was not clear yet what this meant in terms of schooling, but it was a concern that a partial re-opening for Secondary schools following half term could have a negative impact on exam year pupils.
- Careers Wales had seen an increased footfall during the period of the pandemic, which was likely due to the fact that support was now being accessed remotely.
- Funding was available from Welsh Government for a scheme called Kickstart which identified opportunities for those in the 18-24 age group to be linked to employment for six months both within the Council and the wider Vale of Glamorgan area.

Following consideration of the report it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the Cabinet reference, appended report and Strategy be noted.

No.

Reason for recommendation

To provide the Committee with an overview of the work undertaken in response, transition and recovery from the Coronavirus pandemic.

131 PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A NEW CENTRE FOR LEARNING AND WELLBEING AND A SPECIALIST RESOURCE BASE AT GLADSTONE PRIMARY SCHOOL WHICH WOULD BE MANAGED BY YSGOL Y DERI FROM SEPTEMBER 2021 (DLS) -

The 21st Century Schools Project Manager presented the report, the purpose of which was to advise Committee of the Council's proposal to transform specialist education in the Vale of Glamorgan, and to receive their feedback to form part of a consultation report which would in turn be considered by Cabinet following the completion of the consultation exercise.

The Officer advised that on 7th September, 2020 the Director of Learning and Skills launched the consultation on the proposal to establish a Centre for Learning and Wellbeing and a specialist resource base at Gladstone Primary School which would be managed by Ysgol Y Deri from September 2021. The consultation document, which was contained with its appendices at Appendix A to the report, had been issued to prescribed consultees as outlined in the School Organisation Code 2018, and outlined the Council's proposal to transform specialist education by;

- establishing a specialist resource base at Gladstone primary school as a satellite of Ysgol y Deri from September 2021;
- discontinuing Y Daith and establishing a new Centre for Learning and Wellbeing under the management of Ysgol Y Deri from September 2021; and
- constructing a new building for the Centre for Learning and Wellbeing pupils on the Court Road Depot site in Barry from January 2023.

The Officer provided some more detail regarding each element of the proposal, the consultation for which was due to close on 18th October, 2020. Consultees had been asked to note whether they were in support, against, or had no opinion in relation to the three different strands of the proposal, and the Officer reported that of the responses which had been received to date, the overwhelming majority had been positive across all three strands with only four key issues identified, which were;

- opposition to losing the skills and expertise of the existing staff at Y Daith;
- ensuring that pupils who are in Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) were included as part of the proposal;
- the capacity of the proposed site may not be sufficient; and
- some pupils had been unsure regarding the proposed name of the school.

The Officer addressed each concern in turn, assuring Members that all staff at Y Daith would transfer to the new Centre for Learning and Wellbeing as of September 2021, that EOTAS provision would remain under the management of the Council and

No.

resources retained centrally, that the proposed capacity of 60 pupils was consistent with the number currently on roll at Y Daith but the site was large and the Centre could be expanded upon if necessary, and that while the proposed Centre would form part of Ysgol y Deri it would have its own building, name and identity.

Discussion ensued, with the consensus amongst Members being that this was an excellent scheme to be endorsed and applauded. The Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration, with permission to speak, added that the development of a Centre for Learning and Wellbeing had been a long-held ambition and highlighted the importance of recognising that not all children fitted the same mould, and as such there was a need to provide more support and expertise in this area.

There being no further comments from Members it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the Committee note the consultation document and the relevant appendices on the proposal to establish a Centre for Learning and Wellbeing and a specialist resource base at Gladstone Primary School which would be managed by Ysgol Y Deri from September 2021.

(2) T H A T the Committee endorse the proposal and their feedback be considered by Cabinet as part of the consultation report which would be developed following the completion of the consultation exercise.

Reasons for Recommendations

(1) To ensure that the Committee is consulted on the proposal.

(2) To ensure feedback received from the Committee is considered by Cabinet as part of the consultation report.

132 GOVERNOR TRAINING REPORT FOR THE 2019/20 ACADEMIC YEAR (DLS) –

The Operational Manager for Strategy and Resources presented the report which was an annual item and was presented each year to report on governor training for the preceding academic year.

The Officer advised that due to restrictions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, no governor training had been possible from mid-March onwards and therefore only half of the year's training programme had been delivered. There had, however, been high percentage performances on each of the three questions across the 251 evaluations received, with Q1 and Q3 having recorded their highest ever levels, as set out below:

No.

| Question | % of good or very good evaluations |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| 1. How well did the course meet its stated aims and objectives? | 98.60 |
| 2. How useful was the course content to your needs? | 96.90 |
| 3. How effective were the course providers? | 98.80 |

The Officer noted that E-learning for all the mandatory training elements would continue to be available so that all governors could fulfil their mandatory requirements, and advised that while physical attendance at governor training would not be possible for the foreseeable future, the Vale of Glamorgan's Governor Support Unit was in discussion with Consortium colleagues about the possible provision of online training opportunities for governors with the first training webinar for new parent governors to be delivered the following week.

Having considered the report it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the contents of the report be noted.

Reason for Recommendation

Following consideration of the Governor Training report for 2019/20 academic year.