

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17 MAY 2016

Present: Councillor Richard Cook (Chairperson), Councillors Boyle, Chaundy, Gordon, Joyce, Murphy, Dianne Rees and Lynda Thorne

: Co-opted Members: Mrs P Arlotte (Roman Catholic representative), Carol Cobert (Church in Wales representative) and Mrs Hayley Smith (Parent Governor Representative)

88 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Derrick Morgan.

89 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

90 : SCHOOLS ORGANISATION PLANNING: SCHOOLS CATCHMENT AREA CONSULTATION - CONSIDERATION OF CALLED-IN CABINET DECISION CAB/15/84

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Dianne Rees and Councillor Paul Mitchell as Call-In Councillor witnesses to the meeting and also invited Councillor Sarah Merry Decision Maker; Nick Batchelar Director of Education & Lifelong Learning; Michelle Duddridge-Hussein Schools Organisation Programme Team Manager; Mr John Hayes Head Teacher of Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Plasmawr; Mrs Sara Williams Member of Governing Body of Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Plasmawr; Gruff McVeigh Sixth Former at Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Plasmawr; Mr Alun Davies Head Teacher of Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Glantaf; Mrs Elinor Patchell Member of Governing Body of Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Glantaf, and Chair of Governing Body of Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Edeyrn to the meeting.

The Chairperson asked if Cllr Neil McEvoy, the third Call-In Councillor, was attending, Scrutiny officers said that they had had no communication from Cllr McEvoy other than the Call-In request.

Cllr Rees stated that although she was a Member of the Scrutiny committee, because she was calling-in the decision she would take no part in the committee's deliberations.

The Chairperson advised that there would be the option for simultaneous translation at the meeting.

The Chairperson invited Paul Keeping to explain the Call-In process to the meeting. Paul Keeping advised that the Committee would hear evidence by the Call-In Councillors to explain their reasons for the Call-In; there would be an opportunity for questions; the Cabinet Member and officers would respond and then an opportunity for further questions; Witnesses would then have an opportunity to make statements; Written statements would then be considered before the summing up.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Dianne Rees to give her presentation explaining her reasons for calling in this decision:

Councillor Rees stated that she would like to Call In the decision for the following reasons:

- 1) The change is ill conceived. It is a short term answer to Welsh medium secondary provision in the catchment areas of both Ysgol Plasmawr and Ysgol Glantaf.
  - The combined projected demand for places from within the Ysgol Glantaf and Ysgol Plasmawr catchment areas exceeds the combined number of places available at entry September 2019, yet figures for past 2017 were not taken into account in making the decision. This is despite the fact that they were taken into account in the decision not to proceed currently with changes to the English medium high school catchments of Fitzalan High School and Cantonian High School and associated English medium primary school catchment areas.
  - Only the projected demand for 2017 at Ysgol Glantaf and Ysgol Plasmawr was consulted on that is where there would be 201 pupils looking for places at Ysgol Glantaf which has 240 places at present and 210 pupils looking for places at Ysgol Plasmawr which currently has 180 places available.
  - The decision taken to move Ysgol Pencae catchment area from Ysgol Plasmawr is a short term measure to deal with more demand for places at Ysgol Plasmawr and less demand than places at Ysgol Glantaf in 2017. It takes no account of projected demand for 2019 when Glantaf would be full with 240 pupils seeking places at Glantaf.
  - Even if Ysgol Pencae catchment is moved into Ysgol Glantaf catchment, Ysgol Plasmawr would be full by 2020/2021.
- 2) Several key stakeholders have expressed their concerns that the change could have unwelcome consequences for the social and academic wellbeing of pupils.
  - The proposal to remove Ysgol Pencae Primary School from the Plasmawr catchment area would mean that Ysgol Glantaf would then receive all three best performing Welsh medium primary schools, leaving Plasmawr with a less well mixed population. The change would adversely affect the socio economic balance of Plasmawr, and risks creating a perception among aspirational parents that Ysgol Glantaf is an “elite” school. Many people consider Free Schools Meals data is a crude method of judging socio economic mix and does not give an accurate representation of Cardiff areas.
  - Removing Ysgol Pencae from the Plasmawr catchment could impact negatively on pupils’ ability to engage socially through the medium of Welsh.
  - Removing Ysgol Pencae from the Plasmawr catchment could have a negative effect on sixth form provision.
- 3) The consultation exercise disregards the views of a large majority of people.
  - The number of objections received is similar to those received in the consultation on changes to catchment areas of the English medium schools, but whereas the Cabinet were recommended to not proceed currently with

changes to the English medium school catchment areas, the Cabinet approved the changes to the Welsh medium catchment areas.

Moreover, large numbers of objections from pupils were also disregarded.

- Catchment areas have already been subject to considerable change in recent years. Further short term changes are unnecessarily disruptive, will be detrimental to confidence in Welsh medium schools secondary provision and most importantly will not address the issue of medium to long term sufficiency of Welsh medium secondary school places in the catchment areas of the two schools and across the City.

4) The decision should be called in and officers advised to carry out a review of options for Welsh medium secondary provision in the existing catchment areas of the two schools and across the City.

- Key stakeholders should be offered the opportunity to air their views on the catchment area changes in the Call In process.
- The decision should be withdrawn and, as with the English medium high school catchment area changes in this part of the City, the changes should not be proceeded with until such time as an early review can be conducted.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Paul Mitchell to give his presentation explaining his reasons for calling in this decision:

Councillor Mitchell stated that he would like to Call In the decision for the following reasons:

The following forms the basis of the call-in request. I am mindful that this call-in may delay implementation, if the original decision is upheld, until Sep 2018 as the determination year normally is scheduled to cut off at April 15<sup>th</sup>. I am advised that this cannot be extended but would ask that dispensation be sought to extend this deadline given the circumstances e.g. election purdah.

I am particularly mindful of the Ysgol Glantaf location with two nearby single form entry primaries (Ysgol Pencae and Ysgol Glan Ceubal) as well as two single-form entry EM schools nearby as well. I note from looking at the map and reports that the Council is sustaining FOUR single-form entry schools on four sites in such a relatively small geographical area: I would not be surprised if consolidation into two double-form entry schools may have to be considered as Government funding continues to be cut in the foreseeable future.

## **BACKGROUND**

As you know, I have had representations from the parents, Chair, governors and teachers relayed to me primarily via a senior teacher at Ysgol Plasmawr. I have also been informed that the number of respondents opposed to the change was around 300 with a petition with over 400 signatures which was documented in the report. Whilst most respondents do understand that a consultation is NOT a referendum and whilst I appreciate those in favour are less likely to respond, I feel that a substantial volume of concerns raised by stakeholders to this point does merit further considerations during a call-in.

Ysgol Plasmawr has worked on the 14-19 agenda for many years in partnership with Ysgol Glantaf and I am assured that all support the Authority's need to have a clear strategy for the development of Welsh Medium education in Cardiff. It is also widely acknowledged that rising demand suggests that a 4th secondary school may be required but this will need longer-term planning and extensive consultation. Furthermore, the timing and scale of the Plasdŵr developments along Llantrisant Road will also make it difficult to predict the future demand and pressures upon the schools concerned in the medium to long-term.

They acknowledge the over-supply concerns encapsulated in Table 8 of the report (see below) but argue that moving a school catchment area for the sake of 30 or so pupils for 2 years when numbers are projected to dip at Ysgol Plasmawr in 2018 seems to be a reactive and short-term decision and may create further issues especially as many families may well choose to follow siblings to Plasmawr in 2017 and 2018.

It is further acknowledged by many that the council has a duty to operate on a council-wide basis with the difficulty of dealing with three tiers of sometimes conflicting placement allocations involving two mediums of education and faith-based schools. It is appreciating that Government guidelines prescribe certain actions but there are key issues that they wish me to raise at the call-in on their behalf which are as follows.

#### **1. CONSIDERATION OF POST-2017 DATA:**

It can be argued that the proposal was based on balancing the demand for and supply of school places yet appeared to considered data only for 2017/18 despite the projections clearly showing that the demand and supply for places at Ysgol Glantaf will balance naturally without any changes in catchment areas by 2019/20.

I would certainly welcome clarification as to why the report states in paragraph 118 that *'the admission arrangements that may be required beyond 2017/18 cannot be consulted on at this time'*. This appears to be in sharp contrast to the Published Admission Numbers or PANs arguments used in discussing Fitzalan and Cantonian catchment areas (paragraph 35 of the report) where projections for 2019/20 are used.

They conclude, as I do, that admission arrangements are subject to future PAN data and have referred me to the precedent for the use of longer-term projections set in July 2014 with the report on the provision of Welsh medium education in Llanishen which used projections for WM primary education provision (which is difficult to predict) up to 2019/20 - a full five years after the report.

They also cite the 3 years' worth of future projections that were used in consultation prior to establishing Ysgol Glan Ceubal in 2014 where it was stated that *'The permanent establishment of Ysgol Glan Ceubal at 1 form of entry is expected to closely match the future demand for places at the school and from within its catchment area.'*

I note demand for places is evaluated within the Cabinet report, pages 16 to 19; projections are clearly set out for September 2015 until 2021 (i.e. seven years after Reception intake of 2015) and is therefore the longest projection period available

using verified school census data). I also note the combined demand from within the two catchments would exceed places available at entry to Year 7 in 2019 so I would expect there would be solid data on which to query and question admission arrangements as these are number-dependent.

I appreciate Ysgol Glantaf currently has surplus spaces across the school having operated at 6FE in recent years and could, if necessary; admit in excess of 8FE at that point in 2021. However, there is also surplus at Ysgol Bro Edern (to the East of Glantaf) and by 2019 the Council will have greater certainty in respect of LDP developments and numbers and should, in my view, review the potential to add extra forms to Plasmawr and Glantaf for 2021 onwards. I further argue that Ysgol Glantaf could then expand in a more manageable fashion to an 8+-form entry in 2011 and beyond as the strategic site developments progress.

The Council may argue at this point that Welsh Government legislation may prevent consultations on admission arrangements that could be implemented to balance the Glantaf/ Bro Edern catchments in 2019 e.g. such as transferring the Ysgol Glan Morfa catchment to Ysgol Bro Edern.

I also note the argument that it may not be beneficial to do so at this stage when the catchment population within the current Glantaf catchment would be reduced.

However, my primary suggestion of imposing equal form admission caps of 210 on both schools in the short-term will allow a more realistic and far more extensive review in 2019 once timescales and demands from the additional dwellings planned in West Cardiff become evident especially those that will fall within the catchment of Ysgol Plasmawr.

I further agree that it is extremely unlikely that the number of statutory school age pupils on roll at Ysgol Plasmawr would fall by any significant margin and I therefore believe a more cohesive solution – possibly including plans for a fourth secondary school – will be more significantly advanced by then based on more robust PAN data projections.

I must therefore again express sympathy with the argument put by respondents that it seems illogical to use long term projections in most cases yet only short term projections in this one particular case even given the above considerations.

Furthermore, the impacts of the two discussed WM primaries in Central Cardiff may also be a future, and as yet unspecified, factor in the catchment boundary reviews and PANs post 2019 and those pupil numbers may require some clarification during the call-in and again boost the argument that a short term equal admissions policy is appropriate.

## **2. YSGOL PLASMAWR CAPACITY:**

It is accepted that the demand for places at Ysgol Plasmawr shows an increase to 210 in 2017 whilst the intake capacity is set at 180 as a 6 form entry school. This has remained unchanged since 1998 despite three large building projects on site having been undertaken substantially increasing the potential capacity. A 4-storey extension with an additional 8 classrooms has been added since this limit was set and the

Waterhall Youth Centre will be taken over by the school this summer adding another 2 additional rooms to the site.

It is acknowledged that the Assembly Government would not easily countenance one school being over-subscribed through inaction whilst a nearby school was under-subscribed so the simple question arising from this is this: why conduct a short-term catchment review at all when resetting the capacity-limit of both schools to 210 each would negate that review. It would also allow a much longer lead time to prepare schools and parents for changes that development pressures will bring and also allow for thought-through consolidations of single-form entry schools should they ever be required in future.

Ysgol Plasmawr argues that the capacity intake number is outdated and that the cabinet and committees should have been informed that they believe the school can easily accept 210 pupils and therefore contend that the report assumptions are open to challenge.

If the capacity issues were recognised and addressed, then it is argued that this would negate short-term concerns that an over-subscribed Ysgol Plasmawr will have the transport cost implications of Ely and Caerau pupils failing to get into Ysgol Plasmawr and having increased travel times and journeys (and council costs) in order to attend Ysgol Glantaf.

They quote WG School Capacity guidelines that capacity should be decided '*pending extensive discussions with Head and Governors to agree an appropriate way forward within the context of demand for places and the capacity of the premises*' and were concerned that this had not taken place in revising that intake capacity prior to the catchment review.

They point to the report that states that its aim is to address the balance of supply and demand and argue that the most sustainable long-term outcome is to create 3 Welsh medium secondary schools in Cardiff of comparable size to create a better geographical and educational balance in the supply of WM education in the longer term especially as they felt the environmental impact assessments were inadequate i.e. the unquantified statement "*In summary, implementing the proposal would most likely have a positive effect as a net result of pupils using polluting modes of travel.*"

## **CONSULTATION AND YSGOL PENCAE**

I note the arguments around the transfer of Ysgol Pencae and its unique parent-supported and low FSM cohort and I do not believe this to be a major factor in the decision as the data shows, in my view, the FSM data show a minimal benefit/disbenefit. The head of Ysgol Gyfan Glantaf picked up this theme (CA16/WM/47) among others pointing out the FSM argument so I am asking those of you making the decision should not reduce the argument to the simplistic scenario of two equivalent schools simply wrangling over a 'high performance' feeder primary when the issues are far more complex than that.

I also note the detailed and opposing responses from the heads and chairs of the two affected secondary schools but I draw your attention specifically to the email from The Head of Ysgol Pencae (CA16/WM/372) as critical as he leads the primary school at the centre of the review. Although due process was technically followed it appears

from his comments that he was briefed only two days before the consultation began. This could unfortunately have the unintended effect of undermining the reputation of Head and governors as they would not have a reasonable amount of time, in my view as a governor myself, to discuss such a major matter before the consultation was launched.

The reverse argument about not wanting Ysgol Glantaf to be an 'elite school' is made – again I would ask that it be noted but not made an overriding factor in the decision. More importantly, is the lack of briefing about the longer-term proposals to the governing body and the impact upon parents of years 3-5 that the short notice does not allow them to plan for the impact on their children of groups being split up by changes in parental choices and appeals over sibling cohesion mentioned previously.

I therefore argue that a call-in and my suggestions will allow the governors of Pencae a longer lead in time to consider and adapt to the major changes and pressures in 2019.

The Chairperson thanked witnesses for their presentations and invited officers to make their presentation. Members were provided with a presentation on the proposed changes to Welsh-medium catchment areas which included information on the following: Issues raised; Background; Long term sufficiency of places – existing catchment areas; Long term sufficiency of places – proposed catchment areas; Summary of data and projections; Impact on social-economic mix; Impact on standards and outcomes; Capacity Assessment and Consultation process.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Merry as the Decision Maker to make a statement, which she read out as follows:

Thank you Chair for giving me the opportunity to address the Committee.

As you will know The report summarising the outcome of the consultation specific to proposing changes to the catchment areas of Ysgol Glan Taf and Ysgol Plasmawr along with proposed changes to Fitzalan and Cantonian went to Cabinet in March. Responses were received from a range of elected members to both consultations. This included those submitted by Cllr McEvoy who stated the proposal 'seemed sensible'. Cllr McEvoy later followed his original support with the caveat that this support was conditional on 'the sibling link being protected' which remains the case. As you have heard three members have raised concerns regarding this Cabinet decision. These centre round a number of issues;

- potential for detrimental impact on Ysgol Plasmawr social-economic mix
- proposed changes do not take account of the sufficiency of Welsh-medium places in the medium to long term;
- potential detrimental impact on standards and sixth form provision at Ysgol Plasmawr
- potential impact on the use of Welsh in a social context
- the capacity/ Admission Number of Ysgol Plasmawr
- consultation process and due consideration of responses received

The three Members who have called in the proposal are not agreed on all grounds as can be seen in the comments from Cllr Mitchell who whilst noting the arguments around FSM does not believe this to be a major factor in the decision. In his view, the FSM data show a minimal benefit/disbenefit and furthermore he requested that those

making the decision should not reduce the argument to the simplistic scenario of two equivalent schools simply wrangling over a 'high performance' feeder primary when the issues are far more complex than that.

The face of Welsh-medium education is changing, a broader spectrum of families is now choosing to take up the opportunity to educate their children through the medium of Welsh: this, as the Capital city of Wales is something to be celebrated and embraced. It is vital that each school in Cardiff continues with their demonstrated commitment to inclusion and to ensuring each of their pupils reaches their full potential regardless of where they live or attend school.

The Council has a statutory duty to provide comprehensive education appropriate for the age and stage of development of each of its pupils. When it comes to the likely percentage of FSM in either of the schools concerned it should be noted that they are both significantly below both the Welsh average (17.5%) and the Cardiff average (20.5%). Whilst the standards achieved at both schools is to be commended and this is in no small way owing to the quality of the staff and professionals working at each, it continues to be reasonable to expect this to continue with the resources available to each and neither are working with the same percentages of FSM as their counterpart Bro Edyern.

I would now like to address each of the grounds for the call in:

Firstly, the concern about the socio economic mix and the suggestion that moving the primary catchment of Ysgol Pencae from the Ysgol Plasmawr catchment into the Ysgol Glantaf will be 'detrimental to Plasmawr' in more detail.

I would like to bring the Committee back to the Cabinet report where members will see that this issue is fully considered and evaluated within the Cabinet report, pages 20 to 23, which sets out that there is no widening of the gap.

The standard measure of deprivation used by the Welsh Government continues to be the percentage of pupils in receipt of Free School meals. At the most recent census, Ysgol Glantaf measured 9.8% and Ysgol Plasmawr 6.9% - a gap of 2.9%.

Ysgol Glantaf is therefore placed in a higher benchmark category (group 2; compared to Ysgol Plasmawr being placed in the least deprived category group 1).

The analysis undertaken does not evidence any significant 'detrimental' effect – projections indicate that, as a result of the demographic change in Ysgol Plasmawr's local pupil population, the percentage of pupils in receipt of FSM would increase to c10.6% if the change were not to be implemented. Implementing the proposed change would increase the percentage marginally to c11.6% (and this would take effect gradually, over an extended period of time).

By implementing the proposed change, the percentage at Ysgol Glantaf would also change by a marginal amount – falling from c10.2 to 9.4%. The comparative gap of 2.4% (11.6% at Plasmawr and 9.4% at Glantaf) is in fact reduced.

Furthermore, I would ask the Committee to note that primary age provision within the Ysgol Glantaf, catchment is being expanded in areas where the take up of FSM is significantly higher; In Llandaff North (Ysgol Glan Ceubal), Grangetown/ Butetown (the new Ysgol Hamadryad) and Adamsdown/Splott (expansion of Ysgol Glan Morfa).

The next point raised is that proposed changes do not take account of the sufficiency of Welsh-medium places in the medium to long term.

When considering the projections and data specific to this proposal and that related to the English-medium high schools I would like to draw Committee's attention to the tables set out on pages 16-19 of the Cabinet report. As you can see projections for



both are set out for the period September 2015 to September 2021. This encompasses a seven-year period which takes account of the most verified school census data (PLASC 2015) and the most recent Reception intake within that. The format of the data presented is consistent with that presented for the English-medium consultation, covers the same timescales, and uses the same timescales and methodology.

Furthermore, it is acknowledged that the combined demand from within the two catchments would exceed places available at entry to Year 7 in 2019 and that the Welsh-medium sector is growing. However, Ysgol Glantaf currently has surplus spaces across the school having operated at 6FE in recent years and could, if necessary, admit in excess of 8FE beyond 2019. There is also surplus at Ysgol Bro Edern (to the East of Glantaf). It should be noted that the c7,000 additional dwellings planned in West Cardiff fall within the catchment of Ysgol Plasmawr and it is extremely unlikely that the number of statutory school age pupils on roll at Ysgol Plasmawr would fall by any significant margin, if at all, as a result of the proposed catchment area change.

Even accounting for the transfer of Ysgol Pencae out of its catchment, the projected demand from existing housing and current primary school pupils is only marginally below capacity and would still exceed the published admission number by September 2019. This excess local demand would be exacerbated by the LDP NW Cardiff strategic sites housing.

Furthermore, the transfer of a catchment does not prevent parents continuing to express a preference for a school; it merely alters the priority given to applicants which is considered only when a school is fully subscribed, i.e. applications exceed the number of places available if Ysgol Plasmawr were to have a lower demand from other areas of its catchment than pupils in the Pencae catchment, being in close proximity, would benefit from this.

By 2019 the Council will have greater certainty in respect of LDP housing developments and WG 21st Century School Band B funding. Without greater certainty about this information we are ignoring two major capital income streams and neglecting to take account of the large scale developments across the city, particularly the North West strategic site which abuts the Ysgol Plasmawr site.

The option put forward is far from a short term solution, it takes into account the likely increase and the land options that are available to accommodate potential additional demand as it grows.

In accordance with WG legislation, the Council cannot at this point consult on admission arrangements that could be implemented to balance the Glantaf, Plasmawr and Bro Edern catchments in 2019, nor would it be beneficial to parents for the Council to do so at this stage.

When considering the concern expressed regarding the potential detrimental impact on standards and sixth form provision at Ysgol Plasmawr as stated previously, the standards achieved at both schools are recognised and it is reasonable to expect this to continue with the resources available to each. When it comes to the suggestion that the sixth form numbers may drop if there are a greater percentage of low income families accessing provision it is necessary to point out that the admission to the sixth form phase is a separate process. Working across the sites to deliver the full range of subjects as part of the 14-19 offer is already happening and could be expanded further. The key aspect for consideration is that students feel there is a meaningful offer for them to take up at post 16 in the language of choice should they wish to take advantage of it. Mobility and independent travel is also greater at this age and is to be encouraged as part of the students' journey toward adulthood.

It has been suggested that the proposal has the potential impact on the use of Welsh in a social context. It is not anticipated that the proposed changes will impact on pupils' ability to engage socially through the medium of Welsh. The majority of the pupils transferring to Ysgol Plasmawr from its partner primary schools have levels of Welsh language fluency that allow them to access both the full curriculum and social opportunities in and out of school.

Were the proposal not to be implemented some children currently resident within the catchment area of Ysgol Plasmawr, would be unable to attend their Welsh-medium secondary catchment school. A clear risk of not providing a balance in the supply of and demand for Welsh-medium places is that the proportion of pupils not progressing from KS2 to KS3 could potentially increase and were this to be the case and could potentially have a negative impact on the wider use of the language.

Whilst there are those that may question the capacity/ Admission Number of Ysgol Plasmawr I would ask the Committee to bear in mind that the Governing Body of Ysgol Plasmawr is consulted annually on its Published Admission Number and has made no representation during this consultation to increase its Admission Number.

Whilst the school received investment over an extended period of time, this was to improve accommodation and to allow the school to accommodate an increase from c.5 forms of entry in the 1990s to 6 forms of entry from 2012.

Capacity assessments are reviewed on a rolling basis and the current assessment for Ysgol Plasmawr indicates that the school is able to sustain a 6 form entry intake and proportionate sixth form, but is unable to sustain a 7 form entry based on its current organisation.

The last of the issues raised through this process is that relating to the consultation process and questions as to due consideration of responses received.

In respect of the Welsh-medium secondary catchment consultation, it is acknowledged that there were a large number of responses from a wide range of stakeholders including Governing Bodies of Schools, school staff, pupils that presently attend Ysgol Plasmawr and parents of children who would be directly impacted by the proposed change.

As is standard, the consultation sought views and issues from key stakeholders, and all issues raised during consultation were carefully considered, appraised and evaluated. Whilst the Council gives due consideration to the number of responses received, the recommendation made in the Cabinet Report sought to balance the issues raised against the differential impact on learners, and on the school communities that may be brought about by implementing or not implementing the change.

The substantive issues raised in the Welsh-medium consultation were accordingly given full consideration and the decision taken to recommend proceeding to implement the change that had been consulted on.

The decision not to progress proposed English-medium changes was in recognition of the need to wait until the impact of improvement at Cantonian High School is evidenced in annual performance results and there is greater certainty about the future investment strategy for both Cantonian and Fitzalan High Schools.

Should the changes to Welsh-medium catchment areas not be implemented for September 2017 it is considered that there is a potential impact on the number of learners retained in the Welsh-medium sector overall. It was evident that, when administering the most recent intake to Welsh-medium secondary schools for September 2015, that a significant proportion of those pupils appealing for places at Ysgol Plasmawr, having not applied for places in the first round of admissions, were resident in its most deprived primary school catchment areas – Ysgol Coed Y Gof and Ysgol Nant Caerau. Parents made representation that, as there is no school bus

to Ysgol Glantaf from these areas, they would not be willing for their child to commute to Ysgol Glantaf.

When considering the petition submitted by children and young people, the majority of responses being from pupils at Plasmawr – no objection response was received from the pupils at Pencae or within the catchment of Pencae, nor from pupils at Glantaf.

In summary, taking all factors into account alongside both the evidence and consideration as set out in the Cabinet report together with the clarification as presented by myself and others here today I would urge the Committee to make its recommendation a pragmatic one. One that is based on the full spectrum of information and with the knowledge specific to the provision of Welsh-medium across the whole city and takes account of your wider understanding regarding future development planned for the Authority. This would also be with the full acknowledgement of the Officers undertaking the strategic planning for places in Cardiff that there will need to be an expansion of provision across the secondary sector in the future, that is prioritised in accordance with evidenced need at the relevant time, in line with legislation, and taking into account the needs of all children in education regardless of language or socio economic grouping.

There is a shift in the social make up of children in Welsh medium education. I do not see this as a problem but as a positive.

The Chairperson thanked Councillor Merry for her statement and invited questions and comments from Members:

- Members asked if there was a risk that parents who require Welsh Medium education for their children, are not taking it up due to travel to the schools from more deprived areas. The Cabinet Member stated that they match up catchment by supply of places, then the distance to the school. In this case Pencae would get preference over the rest which are in more deprived areas.
- Members referred to Hamadryad school and asked if this was a short term fix with a longer term review to be carried out. Officers stated that the numbers change constantly due to things such as population figures and housing developments; the new school at Hamadryad was a new provision with indicated numbers, which would grow over time therefore it was a two form entry but was likely to grow. The transfer of Pencae was regardless of any other provision or increased demand from Hamadryad.
- Members asked if this would be a permanent change as any further changes in a few years' time would be very disruptive for families. Officers stated that it was intended to be however it was impossible to say for sure; it was considered the most appropriate due to proximity.
- Members noted the 2019 figures as being oversubscribed and asked what communities could expect to see in two years' time. Officers stated that there was an option to temporarily increase admission numbers for three years to cope with peaks in demand.

The Chairperson invited Mr John Hayes Head Teacher of Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Plasmawr; Mrs Sara Williams Member of Governing Body of Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Plasmawr; Gruff McVeigh Sixth Former at Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Plasmawr to make their presentations to Committee as follows:

John Hayes – Head Teacher - As demand for Welsh medium education continues to grow in Cardiff and Local Development Plans for Cardiff become a reality it is vital

that the catchment areas for the existing three Welsh medium secondary schools are viewed in the medium to long term rather than seeking a short term and short-sighted fix to address the current small imbalance in pupil numbers between Plasmawr and Glantaf which could be extremely detrimental to Ysgol Plasmawr and which could have a long lasting negative legacy for the whole of Cardiff.

Projections in the Cabinet Report (see Table 6, 9 and 10 from Cabinet Report) clearly show that the demand and supply for places at Ysgol Glantaf will balance naturally without any changes in catchment areas by 2019/20. The demand for Welsh-medium places will need to be addressed again before 2019 when demand will exceed supply demonstrating the short term nature of this proposal. Adopting a longer term strategy is a more efficient, fair and effective way of addressing supply and demand for places rather than continuing with a flawed plan that simply moves an over-capacity issue from one school to another.

(Sara Williams, Parent Governor)

The recent decision taken by the Cabinet to defer consideration of changes to catchment areas relating to Cantonian High School and Fitzalan High School was based primarily on educational standards as evidenced by Estyn Reports available at the time of consultation. However, no consideration was given to the effect on educational standards that removing Ysgol Pencae pupils from Plasmawr will undoubtedly have. The Authority's approach in this instance is clearly inconsistent. The decision in relation to Pencae was based purely on 'supply of and demand for places in 2017/18'. The Authority has failed to take into account the likely impact of moving a high performing primary school from a school which is currently under Estyn monitoring and is labelled as an 'amber' school under the current National Categorisation system to a school which is deemed 'Good' by Estyn and is a 'yellow' school in the National Categorisation system.

Pencae is one of the top performing Welsh medium schools at KS2 in Cardiff (2015 Key Performance Indicator: 96%). The other top three; Ysgol y Wern, Melin Gruffudd and Mynydd Bychan already feed Glantaf. Following this decision, not one of the top 4 performing Welsh medium primary schools will feed Plasmawr which will completely undermine its raising standards strategy.

Plasmawr's current tracking data for its current Year 11 cohort suggests that its Level 2+ performance this summer could be as high as 79%. Former Pencae pupils in the current Year 11 cohort are on track to achieve a Level 2+ performance of 89%.

In 2015, the Year 11, Level 2+ performance was 78%. Former Pencae pupils in the cohort achieved 88%.

The decision to move the Pencae catchment will also impact upon the sixth form at Ysgol Plasmawr. Former Pencae pupils annually account for over 20% of our Year 12 and Year 13 cohorts. Losing Pencae pupils could affect the viability of the Plasmawr sixth form which has been the highest performing Sixth Form in Cardiff for the past three years. Why would the local Authority want to undermine such a high performing sixth form?

The number of Year 11 pupils from Pencae as a % of the year = 17%; The number of Year 12 pupils from Pencae as a % of the year = 21%; The number of Year 13 pupils from Pencae as a % of the year = 21%

(Gruff McVeigh, former Pencae pupil and current Sixth Form pupil at Plasmawr)

I would like to share with you my experience of being part of Plasmawr as a former Pencae pupil, and the benefits of being in a school with such an enriching environment. Ysgol Plasmawr is an inclusive school and I have appreciated being part of a school which serves the whole of the west of Cardiff which has probably got the most diverse catchment area of all the Cardiff high schools. Learning alongside other pupils from completely different backgrounds to mine has been valuable in preparing me for life beyond school. I think it is important that all schools have such a broad and enriching catchment as Plasmawr.

You have already heard about the contribution of Pencae's former pupils to the successful sixth form I am currently a part of, which has the best A levels results across the whole of Cardiff (English and Welsh medium) for the past three years. I am firmly of the opinion that losing Pencae pupils from Plasmawr would be to the detriment of the Plasmawr sixth form.

My hope is that my younger sister will be able to have the same brilliant experience of Plasmawr as myself, including entering the sixth form.

I have serious concerns for my sister's wellbeing if Pencae is split in half, with half of the class potentially attending Glantaf. This would potentially result in the loss of key friendships built from a young age, in a close-knit class of only 30 pupils. I strongly believe that the anxiety and stress caused by potentially splitting up friendship groups has not been accounted for during the consultation process and will be harmful to my younger sister and her friends. My own primary school friends remain some of my closest friends.

Finally, I cannot believe that in such an important planning decision which affects children and young people more than any other stakeholder group that no consideration was given to a Learner Voice group in either Pencae or Plasmawr and that this lack of involvement of children and young people affected by the consultation process totally undermines and de-values the whole proposal.

In summary (John Hayes, Headteacher)

For the School Organisation Team of planners this proposal is an easy, short term, practical solution based solely on the geographical proximity of the Pencae catchment area to the Glantaf catchment area. In purely planning terms it is a logical solution, however the proposal has significant shortcomings in terms of educational principles and would have a lasting effect on Welsh medium education across the city. As we know the Local Authority is currently investing tens of millions of pounds building new English medium high schools in the East and in the West of the city partly in an attempt to address long standing legacy issues in the English medium secondary school sector where there is a huge differentiation between higher performing and lower performing high schools. Do we really want to replicate this in the Welsh medium sector? If this proposal goes ahead, Plasmawr's attainment standards will suffer and our sixth form retention rates will reduce. This knee-jerk proposal is setting Plasmawr up to fail. Polarizing Welsh medium schools should be avoided at all costs and actively seeking other far more positive short term solutions should be the priority.

My own proposal would be to request an urgent recalculation of the capacity and admission number for Plasmawr as this has not changed since the school opened in

1998. Since that time the school has experienced several new phases of development which have not been factored into its capacity data and admission number. I would in the short term maintain the current catchment area provision and temporarily change the Plasmawr admission number to 210 (7 forms of entry). In the meantime, the SOP team should be tasked with planning a medium to long term strategy for Welsh medium secondary education taking into account the projected new LDP's and the current primary school pupil bulge.

There should be one widely consulted strategic medium to long term plan catering for the demands in growth for Welsh medium education across the city rather than a series of knee-jerk, short term fixes which will only create further confusion for all concerned and bring partner schools into un-necessary conflict with each other.

I sincerely hope that you will take all these points into account as you deliberate on this proposal.

Please do not agree to a short term proposal that will radically change the balance of Welsh medium secondary education for the worse across the city for the foreseeable future, but rather demand a widely consulted medium to long term strategy for a sustainable and equitable Welsh medium secondary sector provision across the city.

The Chairperson thanked witnesses for their presentations and invited questions and comments from Members:

- Members asked what number of Ysgol Pencae pupils attended the sixth form and were advised that it was around 120.
- Members asked whether extended the admission number to 210 pupils would require significant investment or whether this was possible with currently available classrooms. Mr Hayes advised that the Waterhall centre was being developed for sixth form use and the staff room had been moved so there were three rooms that could be utilised. Mr Hayes further advised that the Waterhall centre would be fit for use by the second week in September.

The Chairperson invited Mr Alun Davies Head Teacher of Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Glantaf and Mrs Elinor Patchell Member of Governing Body of Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Glantaf, and Chair of Governing Body of Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Edeyrn to make their presentations.

Mrs Patchell stated that she considered the historical context to be very important, Ysgol Glantaf was the third Welsh secondary school to be developed in 2012; the school had lost four forms of entry without complaint. Catchment areas had been changed since to include Pwll Coch, however this was delayed until 2013. Only one stream went from Pwll Coch to Glan Taf rather than the two originally promised; Glan Taf was meant to be eight streams but has less pupils in each year than Plasmawr which has six.

Mrs Patchell added that catchment areas needed to be looked at as there was likely to be a major development in the West of the City and housing developments in the East; Glan Taf was in the middle; there was no room in the current catchment for any housing developments so they couldn't accommodate any increase from the current catchment area.

Mr Davies stated that the schools are there to serve the community, despite levels of deprivation and amount of children receiving free school meals and any effects on standards. Mr Davies added that it was important to not make knee jerk decisions for short term effect. With regards to finances Mr Davies stated that they have been working as though in debt even though they are not, figures from the local authority finance have decreased staffing levels and it's the Glan Taf pupils that have suffered. With empty spaces, the school will have to prove to Estyn what it spends its money on; if the full transfer from Pwll Coch had happened this would not have been an issue.

Mr Davies added that parents show a wish for Welsh medium education, however the numbers didn't come in and subsequently next year there would be one form entry which was not sustainable; years 7,8 and 9 are all smaller than Plasmawr, Glan Taf has 300 pupils in its sixth form, this would drop to 199 by 2019 based on historical patterns, this was more to cope with financially. 23 teachers are part time, and this cannot be cut any further so support was needed regarding numbers of pupils, there was a need to acknowledge that the school has space for 8 classes; the proposal regarding Pencae makes sense and its geographically so close.

Mr Davies stated that he had been coping with fewer numbers for a long time now, he had put his faith in the local authority to come to an agreement and it hadn't happened as he had wished; therefore, he was now asking for careful consideration for this proposal to go ahead as there was room at Glan Taf and Plawmawr was already full.

The Chairperson thanked witnesses for their presentation and invited questions and comments from Members:

- Members asked where the other pupils from Pwll Coch go and were advised that they go to Plasmawr.
- Members asked if Mr Davies was happy with the proposals and he said he was, very much so as it had been dire to have six forms of entry when he had capacity for eight.

Members noted that the witnesses had laid out the wide context both historically and going forward; PenCae catchment seems to impact on Welsh medium education for the whole of the City; Members noted that Cabinet makes the decision and asked witnesses if they think Cabinet considered all the issues raised at this meeting. Mr Davies stated that with regards to consultation, all parties had expressed views, the content was important, however the number of responses could have been facilitated better; he added that the data is there and the fact remain that Plasmawr is full and Glan Taf has capacity.

## 91 : CONSIDERATION OF WRITTEN STATEMENTS

Members took a break to consider written statements.

## 92 : SUMMING UP

The Chairperson invited Councillor Merry and officers to sum up.

Councillor Merry stated that one quote that had been used was that the schools are there to serve all the children; she considered that this underpins all of the Cabinets policies; they want to close the deprivation gap; the free school meal shift may happen but the gap will close overall. With regards to short termism; Councillor

Merry stated that plans for 2019 would be brought forward but that didn't absolve them from looking at this immediate issue.

Nick Batchelar stated that he fully acknowledged that they needed to get this decision right; exercise judgement and take in account the relevant factors. He respected the view of the Head Teachers and understood the different issues they faced. With regards to the Welsh medium education strategic plan, this was important and was acted on, longer term considerations were taken into account. In respect of free school meals, Mr Batchelar stated that his general observation was that schools are good due to the provision they make for their pupils, rather than the pupils themselves; there are good and not good schools in advantaged and disadvantaged areas; However, post 16 there are different admission arrangements which can effect both the schools and the wider picture.

The Chairperson asked for comments on the fact that Plasmawr had said they could increase to 210 pupils and use current classrooms. Officers stated that with regard to the potential transfer of the Waterhall centre, investment would be required; Glan Taf has the room already; Plasmawr could not sustain 7 forms of entry according to the capacity assessment; with regards to finance, money was going into Glan Taf already and this proposal would use that money.

A discussion took place regarding the number of forms of entry and Pwll Coch and Treganna; officers stated that parents have a right to express their preference schools at the point of application; some submit late applications; there had been a need to increase resources into this, this year; In catchment had been displaced by out of catchment, take up had been slower and would decrease over time as work is done to target admissions of children.

The Chairperson invited Councillors Rees and Mitchell to sum up.

Councillor Mitchell stated that it was a terribly difficult situation; he took on-board the shortfalls of Pwll Coch and the changes to catchment areas over recent year; he added that his concerns were with the process and the impact on the schools in his Ward; he failed to understand that the consultation did not look past 2017/18 and considered that consultation on some arrangements could have been made. Councillor Mitchell stated that his fears and concerns had not been relayed, he was still concerned with the timescales and risk and Judicial Review and potential appeals. He did not consider that the Admission cap was reasonable stating that Plasmawr could extend to 210 pupils with ease. he considered that the notification period for pupils at Pencae was too short; He considered that a longer term strategy was required.

Councillor Rees considered that the meeting had been invaluable and that it was important to have heard first hand evidence. Councillor Rees stated that she regretted that Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee had not been given the opportunity to have had pre-decision scrutiny on the issue in March. Councillor Rees added that she was concerned that the Head Teachers had not been part of the formation of the proposals, and that stakeholders were not fully involved; she considered that consultation on catchment areas in recent years had been disruptive and divisive for staff and pupils; she considered that the local authority was reacting to short term change rather than taking a longer term view.



Councillor Rees asked that the Committee make a decision purely on what was in front of them and not on potential Judicial Review and possible appeals; in conclusion she asked that the Cabinet withdraw its decision and conduct a long term review and consultation on a much wider scale.

### 93 : WAY FORWARD

Members considered how they wished to proceed with this issue and after some discussion it was decided to vote on whether to uphold the Cabinet decision. A vote was taken and carried with a majority decision.

#### RESOLVED:

- I. to uphold the Cabinet decision CAB/15/84.
- II. To write to the Cabinet Member with a number of observations and recommendations for future similar decisions covering
  - Consultation with Children
  - Timely advanced notice of planned consultations
  - All affected schools should be included in the consultation.

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